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PUNCH

Vol. CCXXXVII No. 6202

August 12, 1959



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*For overseas rates see page 28

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The London Charivari

A WORD or two is needed to explain the unseasonable nature of this week's cover. *Punch* covers in full colour take several months to prepare and print so that "our" Wimbledon crops up usually in January or early February. We could of course have appeared coverless and naked this week, after the printing stoppage, or we could have reproduced the old and famous Doyle cover intended for our birthday issue of July 15, but after all the frustration and disappointment of the last seven weeks we finally plumped for colour and a reminder of a glorious June. Next week we get as far as Henley Regatta.

No Vacancies

The new pattern of production in the motor industry is obviously going to be more and more smaller and smaller cars



with more miles per hour, more miles per gallon and, of course, more cars per mile.

Attraction

I see that the Parks and Entertainments Committee of a west coast resort are getting worried about young people who



swim in the nude. "More and more complaints are reaching us," they say. Still, probably more and more visitors too.

Lots Going On

I SUPPOSE Mr. Khrushchev has now recovered from his hurt feelings over America's "Captive Nations Week," and the cure may be completed by pointing out to him that every week has to be something week in America; it was just as likely to be the Captive Nations as Bike Safety or Mothers-in-Law. According to *Chase's Calendar of National Events*, which reaches me from the Apple Tree Press, Michigan, it was National Weights and Measures Week, March 1-7, Honey for Breakfast

PUNCH AGAIN

Punch hurries back into circulation after the printing stoppage. Readers who get their copies direct from this office will have their subscriptions extended to compensate for the seven issues not published. Donors of Christmas gift subscriptions will be given credit, if they prefer it, when renewing.

COLOUR ADVERTISEMENTS

The advertisements in colour in this issue had gone to press before the printing dispute arose. They appear in their present form thanks to the co-operation of the advertisers concerned.



"It seems most unfair to follow 'New Peak in Crime' with 'Khrushchev ready for Summit'."

Week, March 29-April 4, Let's All Play Ball Week, April 4-10, while other ways of life celebrated this year include Macaroni, Ornamental Iron, Sweaters, Hot Dogs, Fun, Frozen Food, and Wallpaper. A pity Mr. K. didn't know all this before; he could have popped over to the States for National Clown Week (August 1-7).

Head Notes

YOUNG men who are tired of having their hair mown short like a hearthrug, or teased out into a Tony Curtis quiff, or elaborately waved and solidified with setting-lotion, may now have it arranged in a new style called the Perry Como. The Perry Como, named after the singer of that name, looks to the uninitiated like a plain short-back-and-sides job with a parting over one eye. The difference is that if you have your hair cut short back and sides and parted over one eye it costs you half a crown, and if you have it styled in a Perry Como it costs you seven-and-six.

Cross-Country Run

THERE is a good deal of expressed sympathy for people who get stuck in the interminable traffic jams between London and the coast, but who spares a thought for outsiders who have to make a transverse journey at the week-end,

cutting across perhaps three of the main coast routes? There is no way across. The sensation of hopelessness experienced by a driver making for Tunbridge Wells, say, from Guildford on a Saturday morning is best relieved by abandoning all attempts to intersect the southbound stream at right angles. Turn left on reaching A24 and run merrily northwards until an accident, breakdown or some other phenomenon enables you to make a half-circle and creep southwards again with the stream. Get out of it by turning left again as opportunity offers, and continue in an easterly direction until A23 is encountered, when you should again turn north. Repeat as necessary. This manoeuvre brings the driver eventually to London, where he will be well placed for a clear run down A21 in the cool of the evening. The whole secret of successful motoring is to travel in some direction, any direction, against what has been rather absurdly referred to as "the stream."

Cheers

POSSIBLY as a result of some long-standing Puritan conspiracy it has for many years been impossible, generally speaking, to have a drink during the interval in any London theatre except in conditions of well-bred chaos and extreme discomfort. Quite apart from the difficulty of finding the bar (it always turns out to be at the

other side of the auditorium, up a flight of stairs and packed to the door with people in their most extravagant finery who haven't the slightest intention of getting a drink anyhow) there is the sheer impracticability of laying your hands on as much as a small (a very small) scotch before the curtain rises on the next act, because the serving staff seems invariably to consist of an elderly lady with bad feet who is quite obviously only doing it because the regular woman is on holiday with her married sister in Bognor, and who serves everybody in strict rotation, from the wrong end of the queue. Alert and practised theatregoers, of course, use secret escape-hatches into side streets and the professional atmosphere of the nearest pub, where they sit carousing like sensible people.

How very welcome, therefore, are the drinking arrangements at the Mermaid, where eager and efficient barmen contrive to satisfy the needs of an army of refreshment-seekers so rapidly that I know a man who was able, the other evening, at the main bar, not only to receive delivery of a very mixed and complicated order almost before he had finished reciting it but also to have it repeated, twice, before the warning gong was sounded. Who said the living theatre was finished?

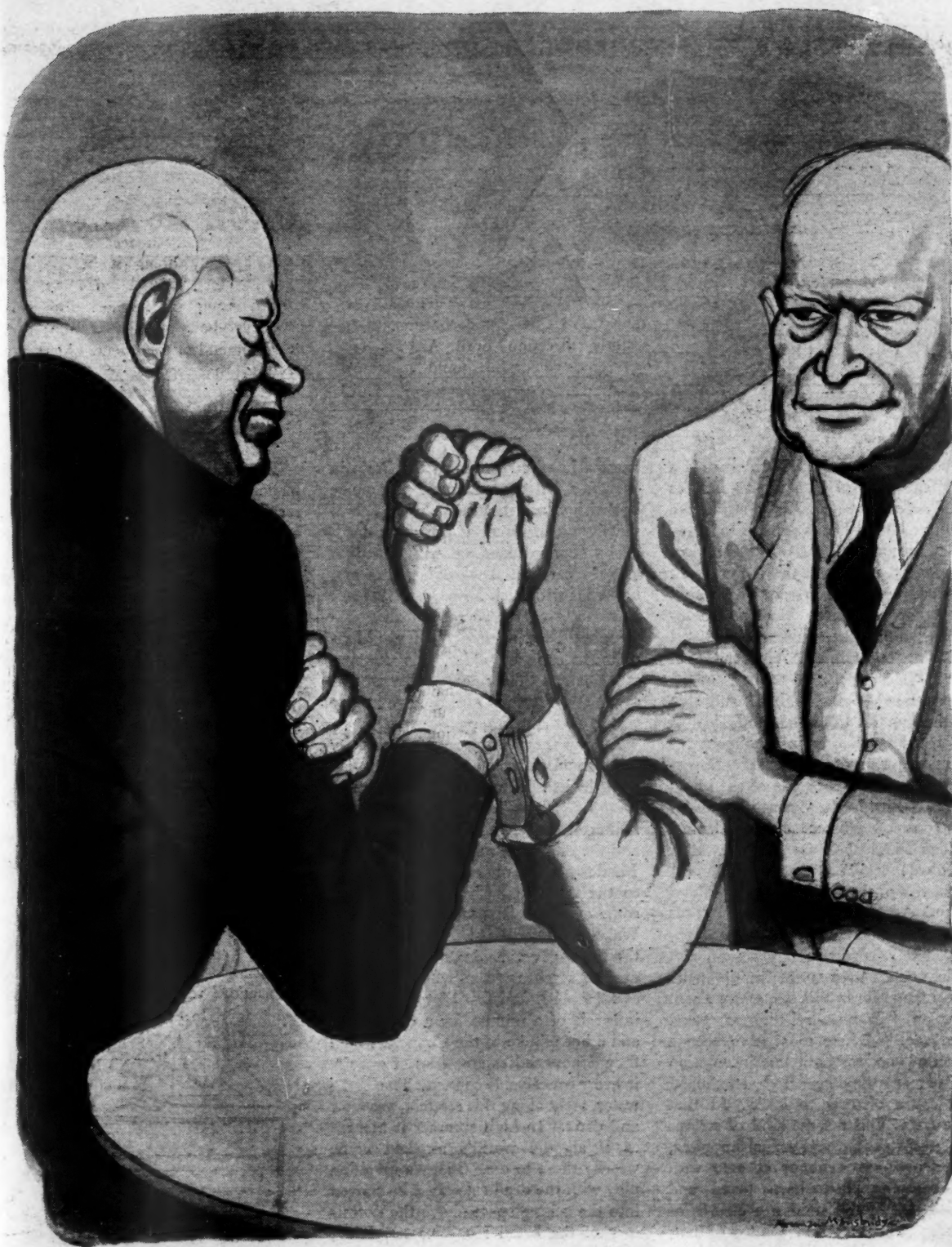
March Time

A FUNDAMENTAL difference between British and German troops is underlined by a row over soldiers' songs in Germany. The Bundeswehr has issued an official song book omitting all nasty last-war cracks about hating England and other Nato friends, but the boys don't like it because the words are all too "folksy." "Why can't we sing about dying for the Fatherland?" they complain. You can never get any British expeditionary force to sing about dying or doing anything else inconvenient for the Motherland. Their preference is for "I want to go home," "I don't want to join the . . . Army" and "Bless 'em all." Patriotism is pianissimo in our martial music.

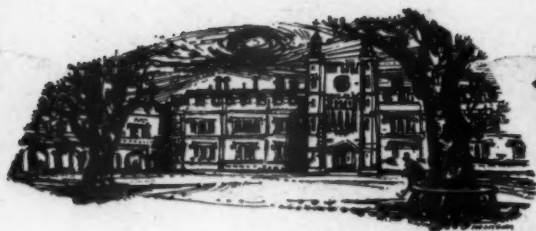


"Boots—soled and heeled, that man."

BY ROCKING-CHAIR ACROSS
RUSSIA
by ALEX ATKINSON
on page 19



HANDSHAKE



A series of articles in which notable schools in fiction are revisited and reconsidered



ONCE AGAIN ASSEMBLED HERE

6 Oh, You Frabjous Asses by GWYN THOMAS

STALKY and Co. Now there is a cave full of bats if you like, as cryptic and sinisterly strident a volume as English is ever likely to know.

But I must confess that the book had me totally bemused at the age of about thirteen. I had a glimpse of what would have happened to Master Beetle-Kipling if he had projected his tribal antics into a tough, unlovely, egalitarian South Wales gulch. My tongue at the time was being pinched black and blue by the conflict of Welsh and English and I had a strong impulse to make the situation even more confused by throwing at my neighbours bits of the idiom of Study Five in the Cornish school for the sons of officers and gentlemen. "Fids! Fids! O Fids! I gloat. Hear me gloat!" "Pon my sainted Sam!" "Listen a shake. Foxy's up wind and comin' down hill like beans!" This last, spoken suddenly and with plenty of volume, drove two almost monoglot Welshwomen back to Bettws-y-Coed.

My favourite in this line was without question "Ti-ra-la-la-i-tu. I gloat. Hear me!" There must have been a touch of voodoo about this incantation which made the diaconate bristle, and I was called sharply to heel. At that time I was under some kind of serious strain. My social and sexual impulses, never over-confident or at ease with the compass, had been foxed and disoriented by too sudden a change of Sunday School teacher. On top of that, for some fumbling bit of malfeasance on a crowded Band of Hope platform, I had been commanded to learn by

heart a hundred verses of the Bible in Welsh, a language I could pronounce but with whose meaning I was as completely out of touch as the shyder dead. Every time a deacon passed I went into this "Hear me, I gloat" patter and backed it with such lines as "All sereno, Foxibus" or "We've got him on the old Caudine Toasting Fork." I would go obliquely to an elder, his hearing muffled by a thick minatory beard, and say "You frabjous old rip. Why are you in such a raving paddy-wack?"

All my thoughts were enchanted by the school mansion on the Cornish coast in its cliff top paradise of golden furze ("Wuzzy" to Stalky and me) falling sheer down to the Pebbleridge and the sea. The school I was in when I had my Stalky phase did not run down to the Atlantic. It dawdled through some of the scaliest terraces seen since Wales took over the planning torch from the Pueblo Indians down to one of the duskier reaches of the Taff. The river at that point had fish that surfaced at intervals of a minute for a quick swill and a hot rebuke to the Council, whom they denounced as amateurs of opacity in every conceivable context. The Taff's water, right along this stretch, was slow and dank. In high summer it seemed as if all the world's air had come wearily there to die. Stalky's revolting ploy with the dead cat which he shoved into the ceiling space above the dormitory of the hated Housemaster, King, would have made no impression. A case-hardened nose would have made Kipling's philosophy a lot more flexible.

The incident of Colonel Dabney, J.P., made a deep dent on me. You will recall that Dabney is the choleric landowner on whose preserves Stalky and Co. trespass, are discovered and are forgiven when Dabney discovers that M'Turk too is a landed proprietor and hears M'Turk denounce a gamekeeper who has shot a fox. This at the time of first reading was not easy to take in. We saw our last group of mounted hunters in 1923 and they were just running away from something with no thought



"I'm not asleep, sir. I'm taking it in subliminally."

of a fox in their heads. Colonel Dabney is delighted with the boys and gives them two glasses of home-brewed ale apiece. This struck me as being a good relationship and I cast around for the chance to do some comparable bit of trespassing. The only Colonel I knew of was a senior official in the Council's Gas Department. He was a speaker for Temperance and flayed the brewers almost nightly. Dabney would have pushed him over the cliff.

But adjoining the school was a bare hillside farm which looked most promising. The farmer was a sad-looking man, a lonely-seeming fellow who walked about his stony acres as if he had never really believed in fertility. But we remembered that Dabney had started out as pretty bad material and it was only the sight of three vigorously charming boys bearding him in his den that had brought him to the point of handing out cake and ale. I chose as M'Turk and Beetle two of the most chronically suggestible boys in the valley. They were as amenable to my muttering as a Welsh tenor to applause. We slipped over the wall on to the farm property. We chose that particular afternoon to avoid a meeting with one of the science teachers, a clownish sadist who, we felt, was arguing with a mean County Council for enough acid to do a properly climactic job on us.

We made our way to one of the farmer's byres for a long quiet smoke. We wondered aloud how we would like the home-brewed ale when the farmer got to know us and led us to his casks. The farmer came into the byre. He saw us and looked thoughtful. I prompted my friends to look charming and start laughing and I began a speech in the M'Turk vein praising the yeomen of old Siluria and describing how my father had once shot a man who had shot a fox. The farmer picked up some long tool, a kind of simple, deadly fork. Then began one of the briskest movements of people in that zone since the days of Cynlais Coleman the Comet, who smashed the Powderhall Dash record so decisively in Scotland that he came back home with tartan bruises. We reached the wall just one millimetre ahead of the hurled prongs of that fork. We did not pause to see what the farmer looked like, but we could hear him howling and we could see that the home-brewed was out, at least for that day.



We crept back into school and were glad to receive without complaint a crazed belabouring from the science teacher, happy to think that by our passivity at that moment we might be helping to assuage some part of the world's collective mania.

Much later we found out why things had happened the way they did. The farmer was a deeply religious man, a fundamentalist who in dreams had seen Voltaire cleaning the boots of Sankey and Moody. He had been driven to the edge of madness over the years by the Darwinian bapiter he had heard from us boys as we sat on the school wall and discussed man. On the very morning of the day we chose for our visit his son had received literature from the Rationalist Press Association and had read to his father over the cool porridge a ten-point denial of God by Colonel Ingersoll. The farmer had rushed upstairs to get his wife to join him in a joint, all-in curse on their child. She was not there. She had fled just after dawn in the direction of Abercrave with the man who came to collect the milk. We had run right into the tempest. He meant nothing but business with that fork, and I can never see an implement of this kind without looking for a wall.

Mother Yeo also came vividly out of Kipling to make her mark. You will recall that she was a stout, homely body who ran a type of tuck-shop in Bideford.

When Stalky wanted to wheedle credit and extra dainties out of this caterer he would chuck her under the chin and "slide his arm around her fifty-six-inch waist." And Mother Yeo would come out with such bits of Shelagh Delaney chatter as "Aie! Makkin' love to me! I'm shaamed of 'ee!" I considered this as good a pitch to work on as Colonel Dabney's ale. We had a tuck-shop of sorts near our school. It was kept by a woman of the same physical stamp as Mother Yeo. I had heard that this woman had a Cornish background and I tried on her some of Stalky's stabs at the dialect. She told me in as flat a Welsh accent as I'd ever heard to talk properly or shut up. I could see that any attempt to circle her waist would need patience and luck and the risk of being caught a clip that would land me on the other side of the valley. But I kept giving her ardent looks and praising her stock with a view to becoming a privileged creditor and the first member of a pious tribe to make debt a way of life.

What we mainly bought from her was a gaseous drink that was then coming on to the market for the first time. The various shopkeepers were given a cylinder of gas to let into sugared water. As beginners, many of them were dangerously heavy-handed with the cylinders and had the Welsh weakness for wanting to make sure by just giving

CHESTNUT GROVE

Bertram Prance contributed prolifically
to Punch from 1912 to 1937



Master (after the event). "DO YOU KNOW, YOUNG MAN, THAT THIS PAINS ME MUCH MORE THAN IT DOES YOU?"

The Terror. "No, I DIDN'T KNOW, SIR. BUT IF THAT ASSERTION GENUINELY EXPRESSES YOUR CONSIDERED OPINION I FEEL VERY MUCH BETTER."

April 11 1917

that little bit more. In and around the school one heard hurricane bouts of eructation that called for scoring by Berlioz. That woman in the tuckshop gauged the gas quite well but she wanted to be rid of us. She had pondered the ardour of my eyes and my trial runs in simple Cornish and put them down as marks of incipient lunacy to be expected of a boy who had seven times played the part of a manic pagan out to kill the Christians in missionary sketches. She started spiking our drinks with enough gas to satisfy Montgolfier. If, seated in class after a session on this pop, we kept our mouths closed for too long we started rising slowly to the roof.

Then there was Foxy, or as Stalky would acutely put it, Foxibus, the school sergeant, a servile and detested lout, over-riply crass after twenty-one years in the Army, a recurrent raisin in the rich cake of our imperial rampage, overseer of the boys' military drill, a

spying prober into their private habits, an aitch-dropping servitor with an eroded forelock, a necessary ingredient in building up the self-esteem of our future pro-consuls. In my school we had no such creature. The nearest I could come to Foxy was our school caretaker. He was a highly literate examiner, lamed by a pit accident and given to walking slowly around the school leaning on a vast broom. His name was Mr. Williams. He was a man of granitic dignity. The seat of his power was a large cellar in which he supervised the furnaces. On the piled coles of that cellar he would let us boys, who got wet on our journeys on foot to school, rest for long periods. We would sit there in the half-dark, happy in our steaming ignorance and thinking smugly of the dry and driven scholars above. It was esteemed an honour to belong to the coke-pile set, and we often stood patiently under a defective rainchute near the school to qualify for a place

with Mr. Williams in the boiler-room. Then one morning when the Pebble-ridge-Stalky toxin was working most powerfully I started baiting Mr. Williams in the idiom I fancied Stalky might have used. I made sharp little jokes about his limp, his serving status. He said not a word. He took his broom and drove us forth. He forbade us ever again to use the kindness and warmth of his sanctuary.

That was the penultimate stage of the spell. The climax arose from that chapter in which Stalky and Co. are persuaded by that bland and rather repugnant cleric, the Reverend John, to torment the tormentors, Sefton and Campbell, and Study Five turns in a real Leopold and Loeb job on the bullies; ropes, cricket stumps, the whole do-it-yourself kit as designed by Gilles de Rais. This chapter excited me. I was at that moment in a mood for depravity. My voice was beginning to break and I had lost my duet-spot at the Easter Gymanfa with a bewitching soprano of twelve. Further, I had just done a three weeks' rehearsal stint in a missionary sketch in which I was a young African raised from the dead by one of the most garrulous missionaries ever put on a stage. The sketch lasted twenty minutes. For ten I was stretched out, seemingly done for, stroking my upstage tympanum as the missionary shouted to the tribe that this was mere catalepsy, that it would be a mistake to bury me. The next ten minutes I spent on my feet, beaming and thanking the missionary by gestures alone. By the end of the last performance my virtue was in rags and I fancied something in the line of bullying a fag. I chose a boy two stone lighter than myself and I advanced on him in a further corner of the field where he was fiddling with the rain-gauge. He turned out to be the nephew of Jimmy Wilde who had just finished his training for the sub-feather-weight crown of the Abergorki Y.M.C.A Athletics Club. He could fell an elephant with a four-inch punch. With me he needed just one inch and Stalky was cold on the turf.

I don't think it was my book at all.

The last article in this series will be :

THE WORLD OF
WILLIAM BUNTER
by B. A. Young

On Being Topical

By H. F. ELLIS

THERE is a passage in Sir Winston Churchill's essay on "Painting as a Pastime" in which he describes his feelings on the brink of his first venture in oils. "Having bought the colours, an easel and a canvas, the next step was to *begin*. But what a step to take! The palette gleamed with beads of colour; fair and white rose the canvas; the empty brush hung poised, heavy with destiny, irresolute in the air. My hand seemed arrested by a silent veto."

Some such hesitation, something of the same kind of paralysis seizes one who, after an enforced abstention from topical comment of nearly two months duration, sits once again before his typewriter. The parallel is not exact; in fact, now I come to look more closely at it, there are some quite daunting

divergencies. But basically, in both cases, it is the richness of choice that inhibits. Fair and white rolls the paper; the palette gleams with the accumulated subjects of eight weeks' neglect. Where, oh where, to begin?

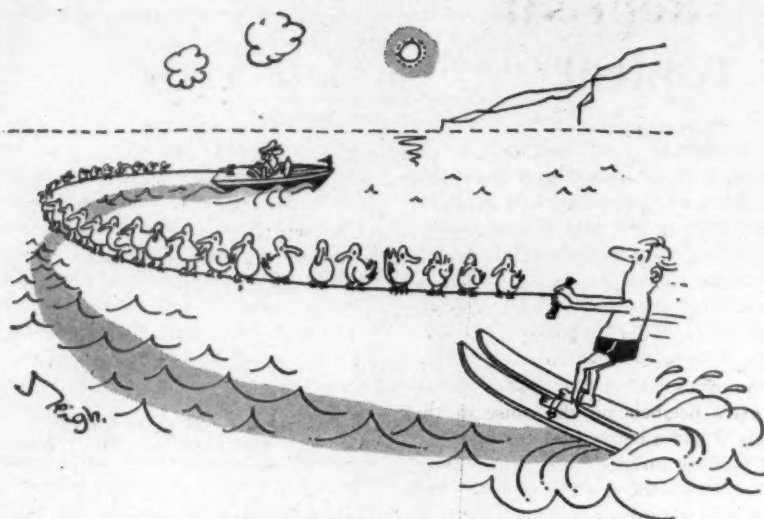
Nottingham City Council? There's colour for you. Alderman Wigman and Mr. Thomas Owen. All those comings and goings, the withdrawals from the Council Chamber, the statements and counter-statements, the Burgomaster of Jena, the cameras and the planetarium, the busy little figures filmed for TV on the steps of the Home Office, the huffs, the puffs, the exclusion of the Press, and over it all the brooding silent figure of Captain Athelstan Popkess. Surely it is not too late, even now, to say a word of comment on all these goings-on?

And yet, and yet—there was that elephant that failed so gallantly, despite her leather boots, to scale the pass that Hannibal once trod; there was Mr Khrushchev demonstrating so ably, with word and look and gesture, what comes to the top of the Communist pot after forty years of boiling; there was—there is—the endless diversion of the Government's supreme self-satisfaction with the state of a country where it is no longer safe to walk the streets and where the roar of dynamited bank safes almost drowns the rattle of coshes against old ladies' skulls. No wonder the brush, the typing finger, hangs irresolute in the air.

Sir Winston Churchill was rescued from his dilemma by the apparition in a motor-car of Sir John Lavery's wife,



"As a look-out he's a dead give-away."



who seized his largest brush and slashed great swathes of blue across his shrinking canvas. No such goddess alights from a machine behind my typewriter to point a commanding finger at the Harrods take-over bids or Manchester's refusal to endure bus conductors in turbans. Great men get all the luck. The inky journalist sits friendless and alone, hesitating as the minutes tick by between rickshaws for high-heeled patrons of the Grenadier Inn and a rumour that Mr. Molotov is coming back into favour again. What a step to take! And then again there is the return of Gordon Pirie and all this spate of nonsense about the House of Dior and women's knees.

Would it not after all be better to give topicality a miss and write something just a little bit out of this world? August is the escapist month, when men have a right to lean back against the breakwater and read a delicate essay on Hungarian wines. There is no need to remind them that four thousand H-bombs would, on the word of Dr. Linus C. Pauling, be enough to destroy the world, nor that a story in the *Daily Telegraph* about a rhinoceros that expired after eating a British Railways packed lunch caused "considerable concern" to British Transport Catering Services. August is the month of relaxation, when even the Prime Minister slips away to Bolton Abbey for a day or two among the grouse. It is too languid a time to be indignant, even with Nottingham City Council.

And still the missed opportunities crowd in upon the mind. No doubt one would have made a mess of them, but equally without doubt it is impossible to believe it. Nothing gleams so brightly as the unwritten article. Did you know that straw hats for horses are impregnated with D.D.T. to keep the flies away? "We turn out about seven dozen a year," claimed a director of the Luton firm which specializes in this form of horse wear. The hats go all over the United Kingdom, and during the last two weeks of July there was "quite a brisk demand." So there was another upward-turning graph to keep the Government's mind off flick-knives and fusillades of shots in London cafés. Somewhere back in those lost weeks, too, was the *Daily Mail's* triumphantly successful London-Paris Race, rich in refreshing fun and ingenuity. One would have liked to say a word or two about that, if only to comment on the inexplicable breakdown in the *Daily Telegraph's* news service, normally excellent, which somehow failed to find more than an inch or two per day to say about the most exciting serial news story for years. And while the word "petty" is in one's mind, what of those sleepless guardians of the national purse who complained that public money was being wasted on Service entries in the race? What, for that matter, of Mr. Cowdrey's disastrous mistake in turning a forlorn and spiritless massacre into a good game of cricket, thus depriving Press representatives (as at least one correspondent

implied) of the chance of getting home by Sunday?

I see now that three elephants are to make the attempt on the Clapier Pass, where the solitary Jumbo failed; but there is a risk that the story may fall flat. Three elephants are not necessarily more interesting than one. If the Nottingham City Council were to have a go, wearing leather boots presented to them by the Mayor of Turin, it would be a different matter. I should be inclined to be highly topical about *that* story—always assuming that the council reluctantly allowed it to be reported.

This is entirely by the way of course, but how would it be if the *Daily Telegraph* sponsored an elephant race from Berne to Turin—road, rail and air travel barred but winching and roping-up permitted? It would at least be interesting to see how much space the *Daily Mail* managed to give it.

It is all very difficult and disappointing. Some sort of anniversary to do with Votes for Women passed by untrumpeted in this quarter; Grock died; a golfer holed out in an opponent's trouser pocket; the Geneva Conference went its futile way without a single complaint that public money was being wasted. All these matters, rich in promise, ripe in their day with topicality, must be thrown upon the scrap-heap. Still the pen hangs irresolute, the hand seems still arrested by a silent veto.

Mr. Khrushchev's coming visit to the States and President Eisenhower's intention to return the call? Well, yes. There ought to be plenty of room for comment there. I could, for instance, make a pretty accurate forecast of the wording of the final communiqués when the visits are over, and perhaps add a genial comment from *Pravda*. But it is too late now. The hand has overcome its irresolution, but the paper, unfortunately, is no longer fair and white.

Punch Summer Number: Apology

Part of the cover design of the Summer Number of *Punch* consisted of a colour illustration of a group of roses the copyright in which is the property of Hortus Printing Co., Limited, Burnley. The Editor of *Punch* wishes to publish the fact that the reproduction took place without the permission of Hortus Printing Co., Limited, and we apologize for any inconvenience which this may have caused.

Reprisal

By J. B. BOOTHROYD

I THINK they were brothers. Eton, Oxford and Leadenhall Street at a guess. They took diagonally opposed corners of the compartment, and from Victoria to the south their crossfire withered me. I gave up scribbling my grocery list and tried to read the paper.

It was difficult.

They spoke in well-projected voices of their social life. They told each other that they had seen Derek, dined with Paul, approved Deborah's new car, run into Eric, had a message from Constance through Michael, taken cocktails at Kate's, seen *West Side Story* again (with Dominic and Jenny), helped Leonora buy a morning-room carpet, written to Ferdie, had a card from Caroline and Victor. Not all in a rush, you understand. After each exchange, polite consideration and elegant legs recrossed. Then, sometimes, both uttering at once, and much play with "Do go on," "No, no, please," "It was nothing, I was only going to say . . ." (met William, waved to Mary in Clarges Street, lunched with Edward and Joyce, saw Tony, took Fenella to the Academy, rang George, heard from Rosemary, bumped into Priscilla . . .) I don't believe they knew that anyone else was in the compartment, even on the train—anywhere at all, except wherever Rupert and Suzanne might be, or Archie or Barbara or Roderick and Clementina (*My Fair Lady* for the third time, ran into Greta). And Ruth had bought a little house behind the Oratory. Arnold's horse was doing well. Gilbert was leaving Sunningdale.

They were charming. I hated them. When I sneezed they never even glanced to see whether I had trapped the germs in my handkerchief. They seemed to have their mother with them, in swathes of voile and a Lady Bracknell hat, sitting in the corner reading a heavy horticultural journal. Once near South Croydon and again during a hushed signal check outside Gatwick she pronounced on gaillardias in a baying voice. They did not reply, but accorded her the courtesy of a two minutes' silence before the segments of their circle began to fly again.

My first impulse had been to read aloud from the news. Suddenly, in the middle of their Glyndebourne evening (Denis and Rosamund, ran across Harold) I would pipe up ringingly: "T.U.C. leaders decided yesterday . . ." or, "After the informal meeting at the House of Commons of M.P.s who are interested in Spanish affairs . . ." But I don't think they would have noticed . . . simply a light, unidentifiable coating of extra decibels on the noise of the train. I had a better idea.

I took an envelope and wrote down as many of the names as were still singing in my memory. They made two longish columns by the time we reached Balcombe. Above them I wrote "My kindest remembrances to . . ." At Haywards Heath I made the door in good time, pressed my message into the hand of the nearest young man and

stepped out neatly at the head of the exit stairs.

Childish? But I feel that it must have had some effect. I fancy it must have pierced their upper crust just for a moment, getting those two longish columns beginning "1 lb. back rashers, ½ lb. Lapsang, 1 pkt. froz. peas . . ."

Certainly when I handed my grocer *his* envelope he was suitably surprised.

☆

"SURGEONS MEET AT CREWE"

During the morning the members witnessed operations carried out at Crewe Memorial Hospital by the two consultant general surgeons. At lunch at the hospital, the members were welcomed by Ald. Mrs. E. F. Wood, Chairman of the South Cheshire Hospital Management Committee.

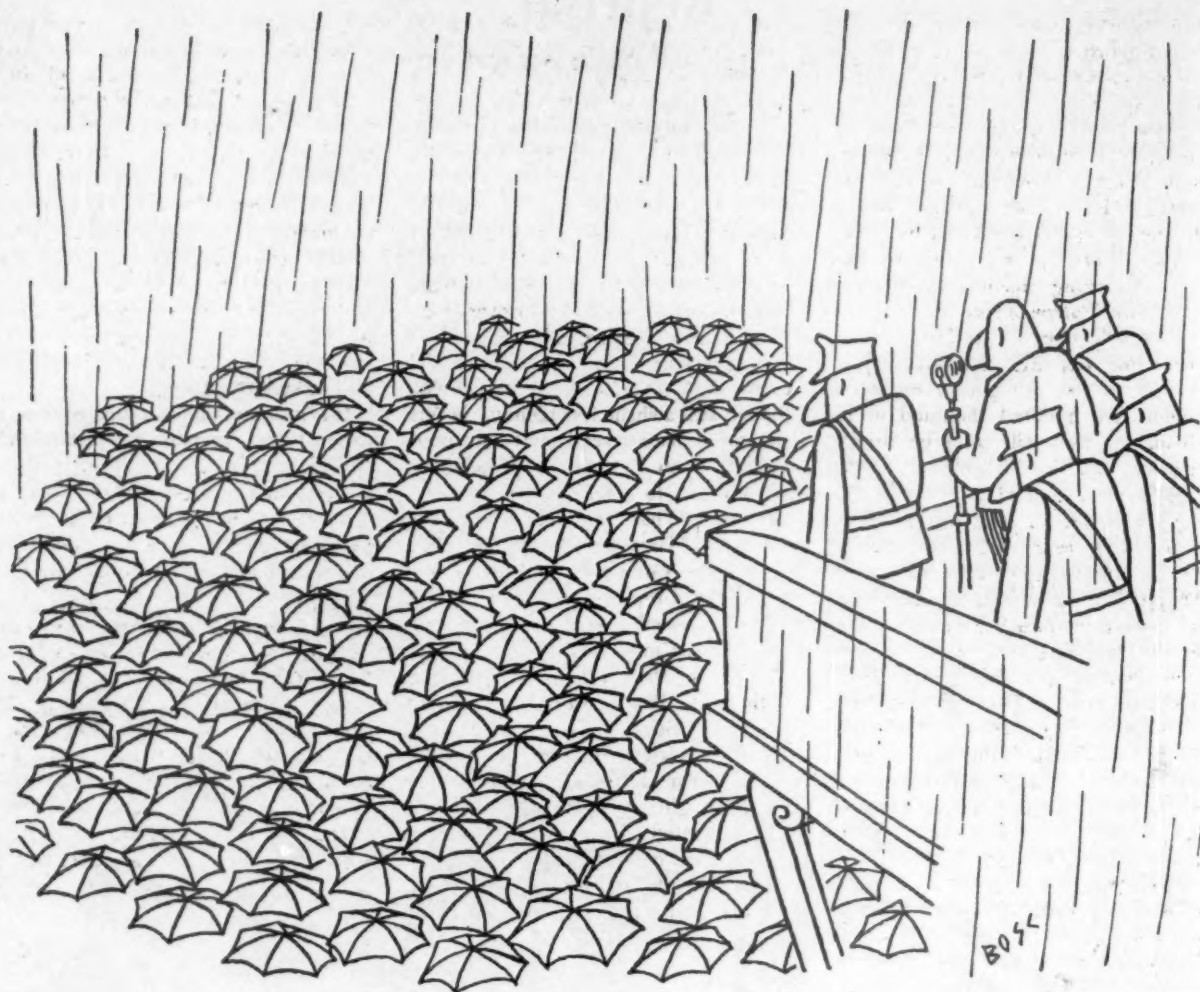
The afternoon programme included clinical demonstrations and lectures by the hospital consultant staff. In the evening members dined at Church's Mansion, Nantwich.

Nantwich Chronicle

No stomach for it.



"A Puligny Montrachet 'Les Demoiselles' '48 — and a bucket of sand."



"Heroes of our glorious revolution . . ."

Standing Room Only

By PENELOPE HUNT

LIBERATION and Independence are very beautiful things. But what they add up to is a tight squash here; because nothing integrates like independence. No sooner is the Union Jack hauled down and the new national banner floating proudly over the palm-fringed shore than 75 per cent of the liberated will have left home and crowded eagerly into the County of Middlesex. Soon there will be camp-beds full of liberated nationals all over Bodmin Moor.

The Irish, who fought like tigers to cast off the hated British yoke, now queue up at the rate of eighteen thousand a year to get back under it, and this must be nearly the most Irish fact in history. Finding, as time went by, a certain absence of enthusiasm for the conditions brought about by the rule of their fellow countrymen, the Irish have all left home and are making the Chiswick fly-over. Instead of mewing Dr. Hastings Banda up, it would be a better plan to take him for

a long slow drive through Southern Ireland, among the crumbling empty cottages, the rich fields going back to gorse and bracken, the miles of sandy south-coast beaches, bare, even in August, except for a trickle of vacationing nuns. The inhabitants have all left to build, ironically, the Cromwell Road Extension, or to become ward-maids in England under hospital matrons who could have given even Cromwell or Henry II a few tips on the art of oppression. Dr. Banda would emerge

from this experience a calmer and more thoughtful man. It is sad to think that in a few years poor Archbishop Makarios will be quite alone in the Island of Love. Everyone else, except possibly the Bishop of Kitium, will have joined his compatriots in Islington. He will think nostalgically of those chummy days in the Seychelles, the chess and the gossip and the biscuits at elevenses, the cosy tropical evenings opening the fan-mail from *New Statesman* readers.

It is jolly that Ghana is out on its own, but has Mr. Nkrumah given enough earnest thought to the seven million five hundred thousand of his Ghanaians who will soon be driving laundry vans in Birkenhead? That kind Mr. Nehru, waving goodbye to the Raj and carried away by the thrill of the whole thing, cannot have realized that he was banishing a lot of Indian people, who had done him no harm, away from the spice-laden Malabar coasts into the steady north-east sleet of the Wolverhampton area, into the bus-queues and the bomb-sites and the fish and chips eaten from soggy copies of *Reveille*. The whole trouble is that none of these chaps, from George Washington onwards, was brought up in nurseries hung with poker-work texts saying Look Before You Leap.

It has taken us a long while to realize that administration is rude. The rum thing is that in all our rough imperial tale no-one who has ever tasted the sweets of British rule has ever been able for long to keep out from under it. Even the 1780 Americans, who were so totally English as not to count as foreigners, instantly invented some British rule for themselves which has become such a sacred cow that they will not allow themselves to touch a hair of its head. It is well known that the French are cleverer, Kurds more athletic, Africans jollier, Germans more efficient, Americans fuller of sweetness and light, Arabs less inhibited, Russians more technical, Spaniards more dignified, Indians holier, Greeks starker, Italians better at designing beach-wear, Chinese more progressive, Japanese far less inclined to strew paper bags around their island than the British. We just have this tiny plodding talent for administering other countries with a less complicated way of life than our own; and what a squash this is building up for us. Soon there'll be 87 instead of 44

in all the primary school classes, 15,000 instead of 3,000 on all the housing lists, 30 miles of traffic blocks on bank holidays instead of a mere 14.

Sound administration has generally been for export only. Those splendid patriots who are composing national anthems and stitching together national flags in Malaya and Nigeria should dwell a pause before they hurl their compatriots into the maelstrom of the British Isles. Just now, over every inch of this demi-Paradise, is being fought a war no less fierce and far more complicated than the Wars of the Roses though still a shade less bloody. Is this the sort of place to send gently-nurtured Pathans from Pakistan only asking to be allowed to read Advanced Agriculture? What with the Town and Country Planning taking the field against the County Agricultural Committees, and the Ministry of Transport lying concealed behind a coppice and popping out into the fray when it sees which way the battle is going; what with the Bird Watchers' Society and the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings skirmishing in the near foreground, the whole place might be Bosworth Field. No dedicated Royal Artillery officer can loose off his piece over his allocation of moorland without a white-haired lady rushing at him

through a hail of live ammunition to point out that he is treading on a Hut Circle. It is only a question of time before a representative of the Electricity Authority is seized on by an infuriated member of the Farmers' League and fried on one of his own pylons. It cannot be too widely realized in our far-flung ex-empire that mid-twentieth century England is simply *Henry VI, Part III* in Modern Dress. And now that the Block Grant is among us there will be worse things going on than the stabbing of seventeen-year-old princes in Tewkesbury Abbey.

It is into this cauldron that emotional nationalists, brought up on *Little Women* and *Good Wives*, unthinkingly project their innocent fellows. Dom Mintoff is teetering down the primrose path, and soon 78 per cent of the charming inhabitants of Gozo will be forsaking the wine-dark sea around their island to become bus conductors in the Seven Sisters Road. Let Dr. Hastings Banda think again before he continues a process that will irresistibly impel his countrymen to turn their backs upon the glittering lakes of Nyasaland, the cedars and the leopards and the fields of wild irises, to take up jobs as lavatory attendants in the Public Library at Hull. Have a heart, oppressed leaders. Be kind, Mboya. Freedom can be bought too dearly.

Man in Apron by *Carty*



En Famille

By R. G. G. PRICE

THE season ahead is not merely the time when last-minute adjustments are made in plans for the tour of the Italian Alps or the cruise through the locks of Mittel-Europa or the laze on the hot sands that takes so much energy to fix. It is also the time when long, complicated arrangements are made for fitting the British young into foreign families. There is a curious delusion, dating no doubt from the days of Lord Chesterfield and fanned by the Modern Language Association, that there is nothing like living in a French home for polishing gauche English lads and lasses until the world can see its face in their surface.

My own truncated stay in a French family after I left school had no effect whatever on me; but it scratched my hosts. They lived on a small farm in Normandy and I had heard about how grasping, how narrow, how lacking in *douceur de vivre* Norman peasants were. However, they seemed very amiable. The father had painted a panorama of a bullfight for the Earl's Court Exhibition, the son-in-law, though he was always up to his knees in the river or messing about in boats, was visited from time to time by his Old Etonian secretary in a fast car full of documents, and friends wandered in and out the whole time. I came to feel these Normans must be atypical.

To put me in the picture, short descriptions of their incessant visitors were whispered to me. As far as I could translate whispers, the information was so improbable that I just looked at them

dazed, instead of working at my *esprit*. For instance, there was a tall, cheerful woman who had cut something out of the *Président*. There was a superb young naval officer who gave me a flexible black cigarette that melted when a match was held to it. After watching me with a kind of projected impassivity he said coldly that I did not appear to be enjoying his cigarette. I tried to reply with an ingratiatingly appreciative assessment of his gift; but after muttering something about "*mes sentiments distingués*" the cigarette backfired and silenced me.

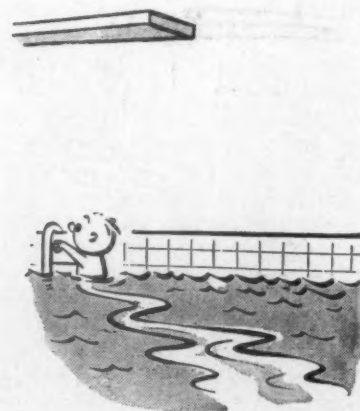
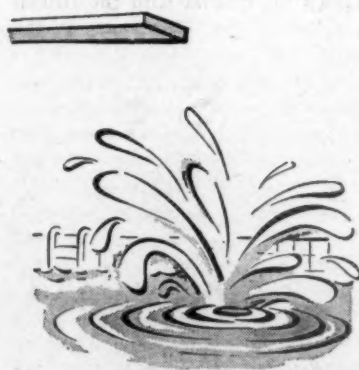
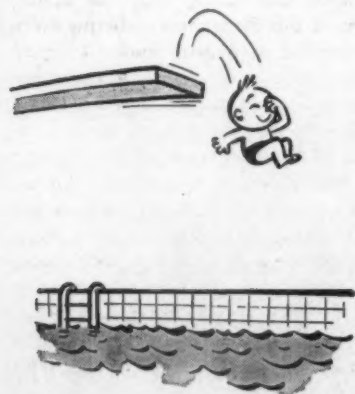
I did conscientiously try to master the spoken language and I forced myself to talk at meals. As I found I could not both listen and work on a sentence of my own, I simply composed one and then heaved it into the frou-frou of chat as soon as it seemed grammatical throughout. Family life was stilled when I slowly said "*Messieurs, Mesdames, en Angleterre on admire beaucoup le peuple Français.*" My linguistic deficiencies cut me off also from the casual social life of the river. By the time I had swung round all my verbs into the interrogative, a man with a small boat on his back would have passed me without realizing I was about to ask whether he would care for me to carry one end.

Once I found a girl who had arrived for the afternoon on her own. She was in a red bathing-dress and was poised to dive. This was my chance. I needed a solitary listener, not a conversational *mêlée*. I knew that in France *les jeunes*

filles were closely guarded; but if this one found my attentions not *comme il faut* she had only to jump in the stream. I advanced and made a comment about the scenery I had been working away at for some time. She not only replied but replied intelligibly. My listening had improved! I probably looked more appreciative of her grammar than of her curves and I almost certainly looked disappointed when she said she was English and we might as well talk the easy way. At home I should not have talked to a strange girl easily; but, dash it, I was abroad. She told me that working at French literature in the sixth had given her a vocabulary based mainly on Victor Hugo and that this amused her hosts. Wistfully I wondered whether I should ever amuse mine.

The family grew worried about their responsibility for my education. After meals the son-in-law began leading me up to his wife and solicitously settling me down to read aloud to her. It was years before I understood the look he used to give as he played this cruel prank on her. She fought back by urging me out into the countryside to meet the people. Luckily it was a pretty empty area, with abrupt, caverned hills, unfrequented bridle-paths lined with uncropped blackberries and a silent river where the branches met overhead. The locals either pottered at the moorings or got up very early and boated right away. The worst danger was roadmen, who popped very French heads out of ditches.

The family lent me a queer selection of reading. There was a short, clear book on the Japanese menace, Guy de Pourtalès' book on the mad Ludwig of





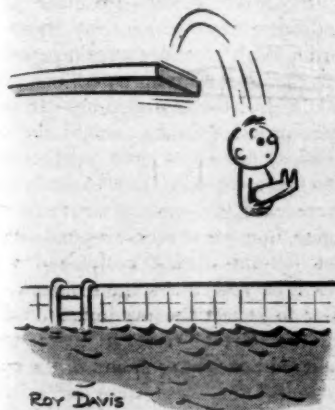
Bavaria, and several copies of an extraordinary periodical that printed reports of lectures given by some foundation and added comments on the audience's reaction, like retrospective stage-directions: "Victor Hugo, poète romantique" (*Applaudissements prolongés*), "Le destin de la Russie est

ténébreux" (*Cris perçants d'agrément*). They also tried to keep me quiet with the newspaper; but this tended to provide me with opening remarks. It was characteristic of how far I fell below the expectations of the Modern Language Association that one day, as I left for a walk in the glorious local solitudes by one door, Aristide Briand, then Foreign Minister, entered by another for a gossip, during which he described his quarrel with the British Chancellor of the Exchequer at the Hague Conference. My only feeling at missing him was relief. He would have rated at least the Imperfect Subjunctive.

One day there was some discussion about an invitation to luncheon that the family had received and whether I could be worked into it. I felt flattered when I realized that fears were being expressed about leaving me alone with the little maid, to whom I had hardly spoken; but I was glad when I wasn't left. All sorts of polish might have been expected of me. On the other hand, the

party was an ordeal. I already realized there were differences between French and English etiquette and I assumed there must be many other differences I did not know. We lunched in a château with peacocks on the terrace, but I never grasped my hostess's name, which was in innumerable sections and might, for all I knew, have been most interesting and historical. The conversation was brisk and, no doubt, witty. I felt discomfort radiating from my worried, apologetic smile. I was so pleased to leave that to each limp hand extended out of lace towards me I gave a good bulldog handshake.

I had a boil on my neck and I began to pretend this made me deaf. When I decided, instead of worrying about grammar, to go for accent and learnt French poems by heart so that I could concentrate less on what I said than on how I said it, the family decided I had better have the boil treated by my own doctor at home. I reached England still a gangling monoglot.



Class Along the Line

By E. T.

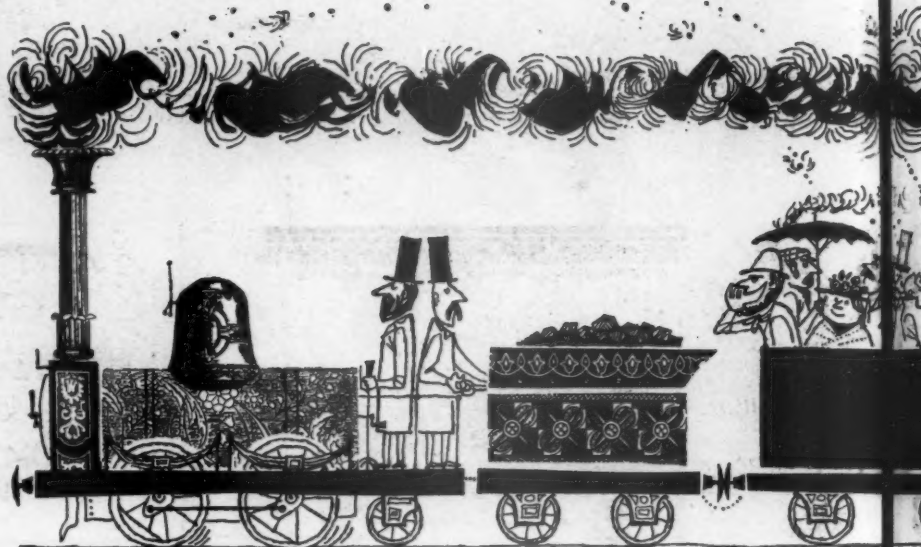
IT is an odd thing that the continued existence of Army batmen, fee-paying hospital beds and hereditary titles should engender more heat among levellers than does the survival of first-class travel on the railways.

Not so long ago an ex-naval officer fought a spirited battle in the courts to protect the interests of second-class passengers in first-class compartments, but the country failed to rally behind him. He was left holding the torch until it burned his fingers.

Long before 1914, first-class travel was thought to be doomed. Second class (the *original* second class) had vanished on all but a few lines, and fourth class was only a haggard memory. Railway economists were openly querying the propriety of reserving 25 per cent of the weight of the train, at 30 per cent of the running cost, for the sake of two per cent of the passengers. Yet after two world wars and two social revolutions we still have first class with us, and its abolition forms no part of Labour's election policy. Even if Labour succeeds in breaking up the expense account way of life, first class will not necessarily be doomed; the higher bureaucracy will still be entitled to individual white doilies on which to rest their heads.

When railways began, they were intended primarily for the conveyance of top people, not for rushing agitators about the country. The stage coach distinctions of "inside" and "outside" were a good starting-point, but a middle class was also instituted, partly for the benefit of servants. First class was designed, as the *Railway Times* explained in 1841, for persons wishing "to avoid the risk of mixing even temporarily with any other than persons of the same apparent standing in society." To reduce this risk to a minimum, sections of platform were reserved for first-class feet. Second class was for those who, to cite the *Railway Record* of 1844, had "sufficient pride to wish to look well in the world" but who lacked "the wherewithal to pay very liberally." Third and fourth class were for labourers, soldiers or old women on errands of mercy who were too occupied with their thoughts to notice the discomfort in which they rode.

Right from the start, travellers had to be discouraged from a tendency to sink

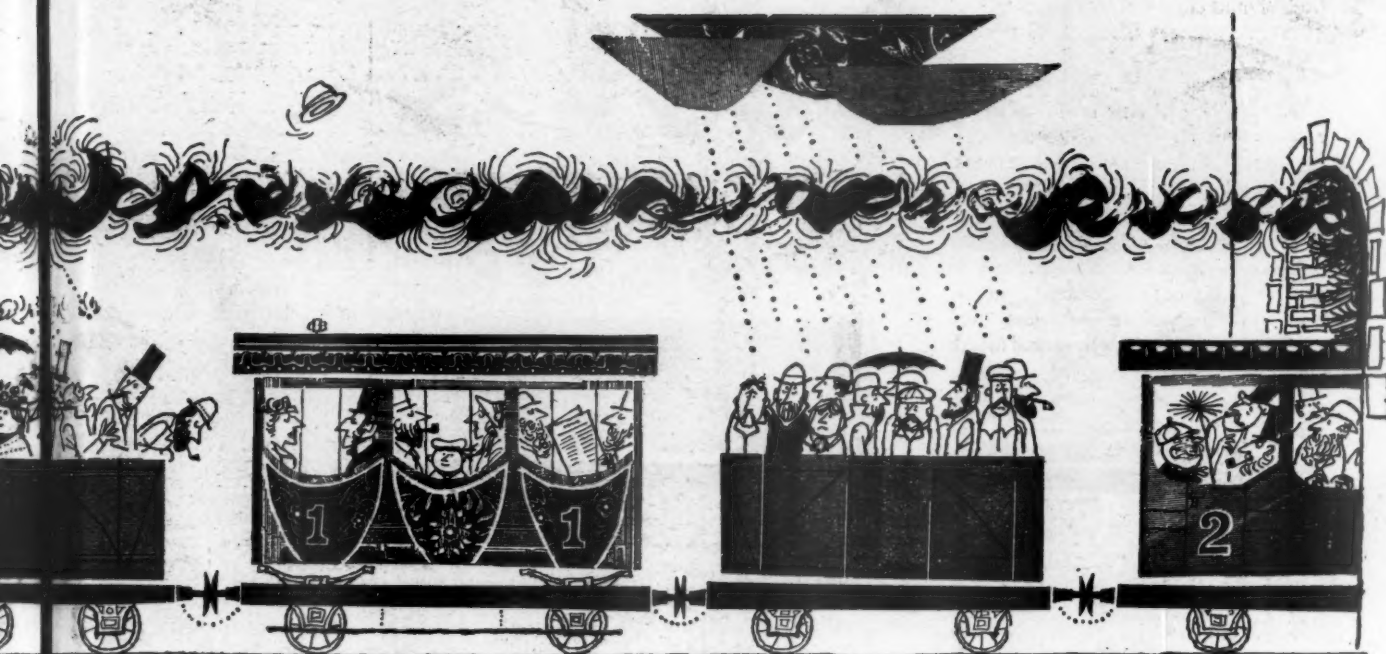


below their class. This was attempted, quite openly, by making fourth and third so intolerable that passengers would be coerced into second, thus displacing the more fastidious second-class passengers into first. Addressing sympathetic shareholders in 1841, Mr. William Crawshay, chairman of the Northern and Eastern, said that nothing pained him more than the sight of a respectably-dressed gentleman getting into a third-class carriage. In his view, chimney sweeps ought to be retained on the establishment of every railway company and sent with their soot bags to sit beside those who broke caste in this manner ("Hear, Hear, and a Laugh"). Soot was a better weapon than fish, for Mr. Crawshay had seen so-called gentlemen all but squatting in fish-mongers' baskets in a third-class train. Such conduct was "highly derogatory to their own station and detrimental to the interests of the company."

The nation at large did not say "Hear, Hear" to Mr. Crawshay. He found it necessary to explain that his remarks had been intended jocularly and that his company had no real intention of hiring sweeps. Nevertheless, he did not conceal his indignation

at "the serious neglect of the better carriages" by the well-to-do. The *Railway Times* thought it was better that one rich curmudgeon should descend from first-class to third than that twenty third-class passengers should be subjected to unnecessary suffering and contumely in the hope of driving a couple of them into a higher class.

Ingenious methods were used on different lines to scourge the passengers up the social ladder. Little could be done to displace fourth-class passengers; as it was impossible to make their conditions any worse than those of third. With certain exceptions, third-class carriages were unroofed, unseated, unlit and virtually unsprung. If seats were provided they would be set derisively low or so close together that passengers sat with knees interlocked. These carriages were placed near the engine, in order to secure a hundred per cent fall-out of hot coals, and were halted beyond the station canopy, in order to attract the maximum rainfall. On the Great Western there were sheltered boxes at each end of the open carriages, but these were for railway servants; passengers who entered them were liable to prosecution. On some



lines travellers who arrived with boxes or bags were turned away. There were numerous compulsory detrainments for third-class passengers, with the result that a journey from London to Bristol took more than twice as long as it did for the other classes of traveller.

Second-class passengers usually had closed carriages, but the Great Western, finding that prosperous passengers were using them, stripped away the sides above waist height and tried to blow the renegades back where they belonged. At York, and doubtless elsewhere, refreshment rooms bore signs reading "For Second-Class Passengers and Servants," which was thought to be a very skilful piece of psychological warfare. Second-class carriages on the run from Manchester to Leeds were not draughty enough to deter robust northerners, so holes were made in the floor to improve the flow of air (or so the passengers alleged). Travellers who booked second-class from Liverpool to Lancaster started off in closed carriages but were put in open ones at Preston, to remind them that they were not gentlefolk.

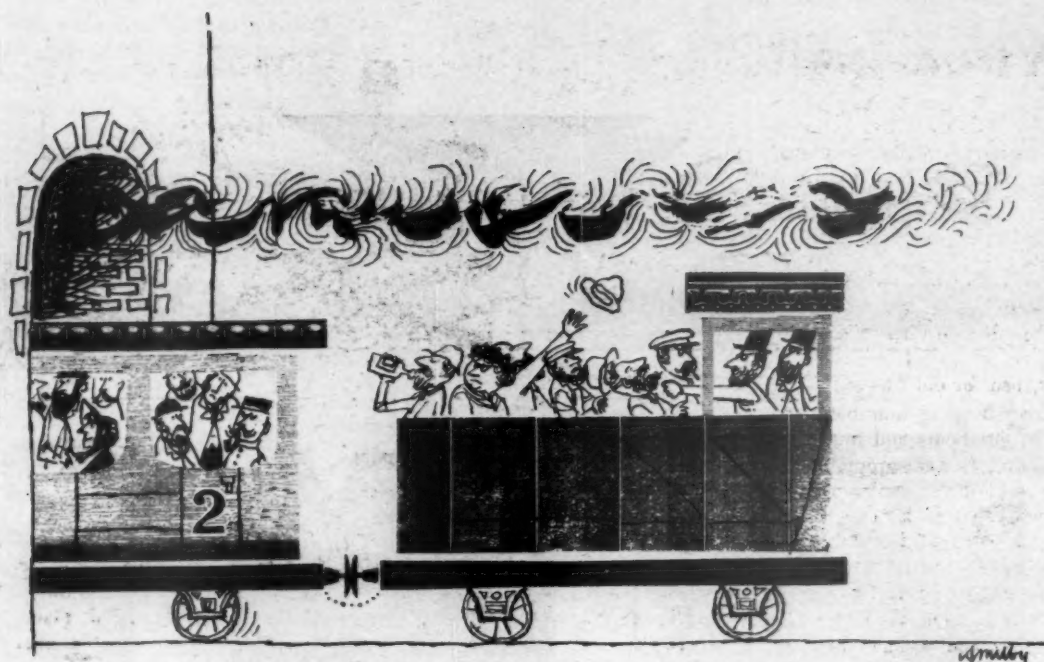
The war between railway directors and travellers was at its height when the

busybodies at Westminster came in on the side of the travellers, directing that the companies should run a third-class service every day, in both directions, in closed carriages, at an average speed of not less than twelve miles an hour and at not more than a penny a mile. Wearily, the Great Western boarded in its second-class carriages again and labelled them third. As it turned out, third-class passengers were in no danger of being debauched by gracious living. It was compulsory for the companies to provide windows, but this did not mean that travellers were entitled to look out at the countryside; so the London and South Western put glass in the carriage roof. In 1845, after the Act was passed, third-class travellers from London to York had to descend four times to book successive stages of the journey, each time fighting through tremendous scrums at the booking office.

But there was disaffection in the railway directors' camp. The Midland questioned both the social and the financial wisdom of being beastly to the third. In 1872 this line announced that it would run third-class carriages on all trains, and three years later horrified its

rivals by abolishing second-class and further improving third. Sir James Allport, manager of the Midland, was not an egalitarian but he knew which class was bringing in, and would continue to bring in, the big profits. He told his shareholders that those who had been in the habit of obtaining the serenity of six first-class seats for the price of two had an undue advantage over their fellow men. Besides, trains were too long, too heavy and too complicated. He reduced first-class fares, and in effect, kicked the second-class upstairs.

The *Saturday Review* thought it was no business of the Midland to put down snobbishness but that it should adjust itself to the natural three-fold divisions of humanity. First-class should not be further threatened. It offered, at moderate cost, "a sort of equality with great folk." There was "a sweet satisfaction to some minds in reflecting that for a little while at least they are in as distinguished a position as it is possible to attain." Why must we copy the American "sacred principle of equality"? Why should we heed the taunt from Europe that only fools and Englishmen travelled first-class?



Happily, there was a consolation for the rich in the luxurious Palace Pullman, with its unimaginable amenities. It came from America where, despite the clamour for equality, it was legitimate to demand something better than first, though wrong to accept anything inferior to first.

For some time on British lines there had been special first-and-second private carriages designed for wealthy, fertile families. At the head of the parlour sat father, between padded arm-rests; beside him sat mother, not necessarily with arm-rests; and his brood, in descending order of magnitude, ranged themselves along both arms of a horseshoe, facing inwards, under the parental eye. Outside the parlour was a lobby; beyond that were lavatories; and beyond these was a second-class compartment for servants.

Many lines were reluctant to follow the Midland in abolishing second-class travel, but gradually they gave in. By 1893 it was no longer possible to travel second-class to Scotland. "The spirit of pride that would not stoop to third and could ill-afford first has passed away," said the *Railway News*. Accommodation for third-class passengers had

vastly improved. It had even been recognized that they had bladders. On the Great Northern foot-warmers were issued in third-class in 1872, only twenty years after first and second had qualified for them. According to the *Railway News*, clergy, professional men and even titled families thought it no disgrace to travel third. Nevertheless, there was "no need for enthusiasm" over the gradual jettisoning of second-class, nor was there any brilliance in the policy being pursued; "it is simply a cool business calculation of earnings and cost." The London and North-Western ran second-class coaches until 1911, scorning to weaken the structure of society for the sake of economies in marshalling and upholstery. On certain lines second-class survived the first world war.

The rest of the story is familiar. In the second world war the rank requirements of the Services gave a considerable boost to first-class and to the morale of those who used it for the first (and possibly the last) time. In London the all-third-class rule, dating from 1941, was accepted without excessive grumbling. It enabled presidents of officer selection boards

to ask candidates that splendid conundrum: "You are an officer. You enter a compartment full of other ranks, none of whom offers you a seat. You must not stand while they sit. What are you going to do?"

The decision in 1956 to call third-class second was taken in order to conform to continental usage. It provoked little reaction, least of all from those who travel at rush hour on the Southern Electric, twenty to a compartment, with standing teenagers making love to each other or flicking half-extinguished matches on the laps of lieutenant-colonels who could not afford to travel first even if first were available. This is the classless society, achieved not by popular demand but by criminal overbuilding. We must derive what satisfaction we can from the knowledge that our roughs are less rough, our delicate females less delicate, than they were a century ago.

☆

"ICEBOX. French speaking. LAFontaine 4-5203."—*Montreal Gazette*
Ideal for announcing menus.

Away from it All

"CREAM," my friends sigh enviously when they hear that I'm off to the farm for a few days, "pints of cream and fresh air and peace." Cream . . . what about our butterfat content? Peace . . . not for *this* farmer's mother!

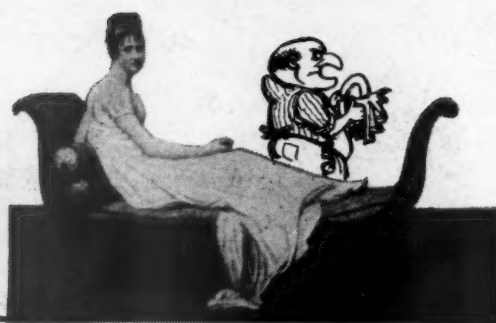
When David first bought the farm I was allowed to do foolproof jobs—paint the gutters, make hay from an overgrown lawn, fish for old tins and other clobber buried deep in brambles, and chase pigs in gumboots and mud. As time went on, I was promoted to assistant swineherd and heifer-catcher.

Then in the Easter holidays, three days before his wedding, David 'phoned to say his proposed "relief" had had an accident and could John and I come to his rescue? Who were we to let him down? Mothers and younger brothers exist to step into breaches. John roped in a school-friend from the science side to cope with the precious new milking machines. My most valuable piece of agricultural knowledge was the vet's telephone number, and I seemed called on to exercise it every day. He was an uncommunicative angel, and even when he was explaining the horrid reasons for the odd swelling I'd noticed on one of the pigs his presence was very soothing. But otherwise our peace was limited.

John would ring down from the yard, oh so early in the morning, with "Sorry to get you out of bed, Mummie. Will you ring the A.I. people about Avril?"—or Primrose—or Kismet. Each time the Artificial Insemination people had a different question laid on especially for me. "Ear-marking?" they asked, for instance. Next time I prepared the answer for that question, but all they wanted to know was "Do you want Guernsey?" "Yes," I guessed. (Wrong. For an untried Guernsey heifer it should have been Devon).

And there were the in-calf heifers: which was going to calve first, and when? Good neighbours tried to be helpful. One said "Keep an eye on the udders—you know what to look for." (Me!) Another said they should be put on fresh bite during the day: "That should do the trick, steam 'em up." So we drove them up every morning from Cow Meadow to fresh pasture. And down again at dusk—which was *my* job.

FOR
WOMEN



Oh, yes, and the lighting plant conked out and had to be tied up with string; the lorry which was to take an expectant sow to her maternity home broke down miles away and arrived only just in time; the bottled gas in the dairy failed and all water had to be hotted-up in the kitchen; an articulated truck stuck in the lane; and despite it all my nerves became more and more resilient. I noticed this one day when I found the two boys mucking out the covered yard with a wicked-looking fork-lift and tractor balanced on three wheels while the boar and sows unconcernedly munched fresh straw ("We thought we'd spiked the boar" said John airily); I suddenly realized this was where a wise farmer's mother should love 'em and let 'em be. I suppose you can call that peace of a sort.

— J. E. GILLESPIE

"DAINTIFYT BRASSIERE
(Holdings) Limited"

Company advertisement in The Times.

Keep sex out of this, please.



Proposal Forms—6

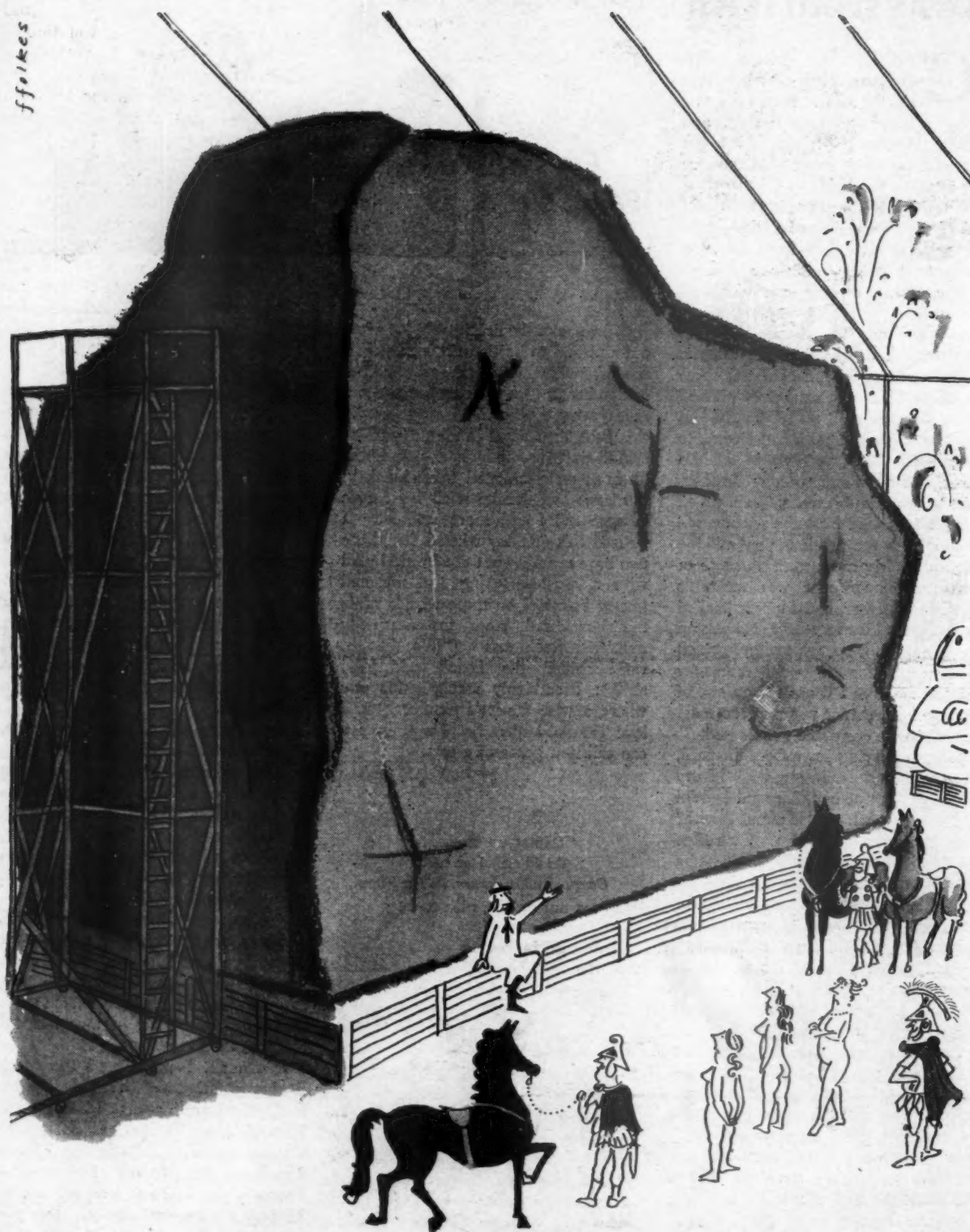
SO, Thomas, I'm not pretty, we both know that. But let's consider some of my advantages for a minute. In the first place, I'm a qualified Chartered Accountant with a subtle, extra-sensory grasp of the workings of the Inland Revenue mind. In the second I could retune the Panhard's engine for you any week-end you like. Then I might as well mention that I have a working knowledge of plumbing, building, electricity, sewage, and decorating, and could knock off any jobs that need doing around the place in half the time of the average professional.

To turn to more cultural pursuits. The snob-value of my palate would be difficult to over-estimate. I enjoy a perfect union with claret, am experiencing a fruitful affaire with burgundy, and run a warm, though platonic, friendship with hock and moselle. I have that sixth sense which tells me the days when Sotheby's is going to be fun, and a power of divination, no less, which shows me how to get tickets for Glyndebourne. I have a photographic memory for Tynan and Taper—know at once which playwrights I must sneer at, who are the three or four M.P.s I am permitted to respect.

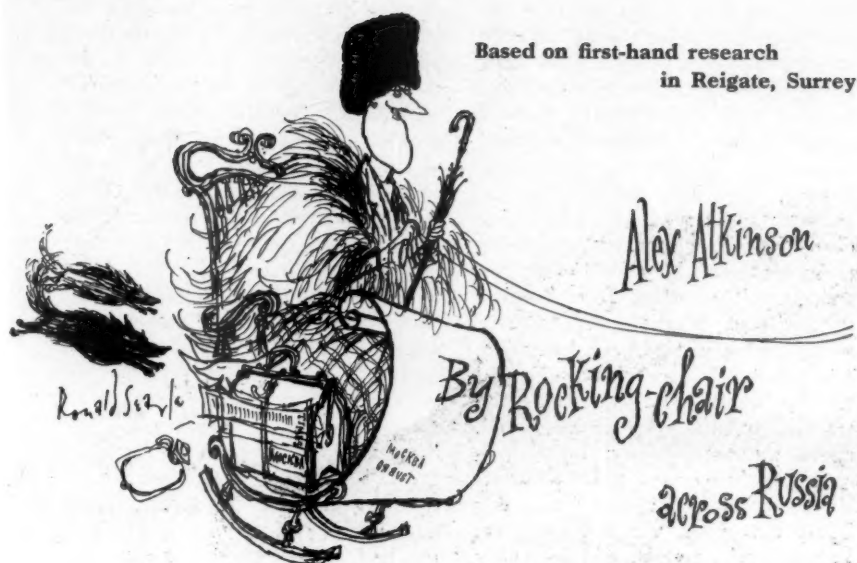
Above all, I understand the Stock Exchange thoroughly, play poker brilliantly, and apply Mathematical Probability to the football pools with devastating results. Of course, I know I'm not a Sex Symbol. I've none of Bardot's poodle prettiness. None of Monroe's sugar-doll charm. But you must admit I could make a jolly good pal.

ffolkes

PUNCH,



"Now I suppose you are all familiar with the story of the Sabine Women . . ."



IV

A TRIP TO THE CAUCASUS

WHICHEVER way you look at it, the U.S.S.R. extends nearly half-way round the world. At one end (on the right-hand side) it is only fifty-six miles from the U.S.A., and at the other end it borders on Czechoslovakia, a free and independent republic. It has been said that you could jump on a horse and ride for three solid months without reaching the edge of Russia, and I met a man in Tashkent, the younger son of a People's Professor of advanced Studies in Soil Erosion and Artesian Well Culture, who had actually made the experiment. He should have stayed at home. His horse fell down in a heap towards the end of the first fortnight, absolutely dog tired, and he hadn't the remotest idea where he was. To make matters worse it was pouring with rain. It transpired that he had turned left by mistake at Groznyy and was only a stone's-throw from Saudi Arabia. He sold the horse to a commercial traveller in Baghdad, and it took him the best part of a year to get back home, picking up a precarious living by singing his native Uzbek folk-songs to cinema queues and encampments of nomad Afghan tribesmen, who threw old dates at him.

"You ought to have your head examined," said his father. "A grown man like you should have known it was just an old wives' tale."

In all this vast expanse of country

there isn't a single golf course—or if there is I didn't see it, and I travelled pretty extensively, I can tell you. I told the Intourist people in Moscow one day that I was thinking of pushing off for a while to poke about in the bush and see how the other half of the world was getting on. I quickly learned that although Russia is enormous it tends to shrink in a mysterious way as soon as a foreign tourist threatens to go and have a look at it. I assure you it is no use getting a map out on the counter in the Intourist office and thinking you can just start jabbing your finger at random and asking for bus tickets. On Wednesdays and Fridays, to take a typical instance, you can't go to Azerbaijan S.S.R. Again, the eastern end of Kazakh S.S.R. is open only to accredited Chinese tourists with a letter of recommendation from Chou En-lai. Nobody has seen head or tail of Samarkand since 1950, and Norilsk is surrounded by barbed wire.

"Why not go to Wrangel Island?" suggested Tamara, a roguish Intourist chauffeur with raven hair and two decorations for netball. "You could be there in eighty days."

"But it says here it's mostly uninhabited tundra," I said, "surrounded by floating pack ice."

"Wherever you went the sun would shine," said Tamara, fluttering her eyelashes. "And you could take a hot-water-bottle just in case. Let me come with you, and I will be your slave."

"Don't be facetious," I said. "You're

showing a flagrant disregard for the principles of socialist realism."

"I'll bet you say that to all the girls," said Tamara. "May I call you Alexei?"

"No, you may not. I want to go to Tannu Tuva."

"Tannu Tuva is on the border of Manchuria and therefore forbidden."

"Try again next month."

"I see what it is," I said. "You're making fiendish weapons in all these places. Forced labour is working day and night in chain-gangs, rigging up rockets aimed straight at the soft underbelly of Staffordshire and the industrial heart of Milwaukee. One of these days, after a night of orgy and debauch, some mad underling in the Kremlin is going to press a button. There'll be a sinister whooshing noise in a clearing on the wooded slopes of the Urals, and that'll be the end of St. Anne's-on-Sea. I know your little game," I said. "You're just trying to make things awkward, crossing places off your map as though they were dishes on a menu. Pah! We don't behave like this to tourists in England. They can go strolling through the streets of Oldham or King's Lynn at any time they wish, without so much as a by your leave. And d'you know why? Because we have nothing to hide, that's why!"

"I know," said Tamara. "And don't you just wish you had!"

"Look here," I said, "give me a third monthly return to Birobidzhen, and let's have no more nonsense."

"I believe you're just a beautiful spy," said Tamara.

Eventually I settled for a round trip to the Caucasus, a mountain region in the south which includes a place called Georgia where they grow peaches. It was not an easy journey. The train left Kursk Station at 7.30 p.m., and I boarded it just in time, accompanied by my Intourist entourage. There were first of all four interpreters in very thick overcoats. There was a chauffeur with a peaked cap. There was the chauffeur's bodyguard. There was the wife of the Tartar interpreter, sneaking a ride to visit her ailing mother on a Transcaucasian tobacco plantation. There were two guides who couldn't speak English, a licensed hunter in case we were attacked by aurochs, wolves, lynxes or panthers (which seemed extremely likely), a woman to do the washing and ironing, her two children, a

small dog called Tanya, a minor official from the Ministry of Folk-lore and Cultural Misunderstanding, three pack-mules, a Mr. Vhagorsk whose job it was to keep close at my heels and wait for me to make a false move, an Azerbaijan entertainer to while away any tedious nights we might have to spend in snow-drifts by juggling with flaming swords and singing the good old songs, the Moscow representative of the Armenian Public Relations Department, the fashion editress of *Trud*, and a man to carry the bags.

Day after day the train rolled through the flat, endless countryside, and I must say it soon began to get rather stuffy in our compartment. The hunter kept wanting the window open on account of the chauffeur, who smoked a pipe incessantly, but Mr. Vhagorsk wouldn't hear of it, for security reasons. The washerwoman's children kept finding

rabbits and geese up the sleeves of the Azerbaijan entertainer's gown, and two of the interpreters played a noisy game of beggar-my-neighbour from morning to night. The man from the Ministry droned on about the differences between Tchetchens, Lesghians, Kabards, Tartars, Georgians and Mingrelians, and how they all loved Mr. Khrushchev dearly for allowing them independence under his thumb. To add to the noise and general confusion, the train loud-speaker kept blaring and chattering away, relaying music by Khatchaturian, excerpts from *Dombey and Son*, classified football results, and exhortations to wash behind the ears, eat less bread, and be kind to the elderly.

During the hours of daylight I would sit at the window if I could get the dog Tanya out of the way and watch the Russian landscape gliding past—a truly fascinating kaleidoscope comprising tiny

thatched cottages, dense forests, herds of buffalo, electric power-stations, villagers in gay turbans or *vodnoy rubashke** tilling the soil with pointed sticks, windmills, blast furnaces, workers convalescent homes and wide plains of grassland stretching as far as the eye could see. At Belogorod, at the edge of the Ukraine, we all got out on to the platform to stretch our legs and were quickly surrounded by vendors of Turkish delight, pickled onions, whole roast Muscovy ducks, bubble-gum, native gourds, cheese sandwiches and unfermented grape-juice. A newspaper-seller strolled up and down with a cart full of papers and magazines, calling out "*Izvestia! Literaturnaya Gazeta! Red Star! TV Fun! Soviet Woman! Kom-somolskaya Pravda! Ogonyok! Yesterday's Evening Moscow!*" Approaching me, he felt under his cart, winked, and

*wearing nothing but a shirt.



produced a well-thumbed black market copy of *Harper's Bazaar* containing a preview of the spring fashions for 1934, for which he asked three pounds ten shillings at par, or a pair of English shoes and a copy of *Dr. Zhivago*. I refused this, and chose the current *Ogonyok*, the Soviet answer to *Life*, which entertained me all the way to Kharkov with its photographs of Honoured Lady Weight-Lifters of the R.S.F.S.R., a coloured six-page supplement about love and laughter in a champion cement works, and a five-thousand-word article on the care and maintenance of a communal cesspool, with diagrams.

"You like our magazines?" inquired one of the interpreters, as he finished translating for me an account of a stormy meeting of the Leningrad Bus Workers' Committee for Cultural Recreation and Home Dressmaking.

"They are unique," I replied.

He beamed. "To-morrow I will read to you the jokes from *Krokodil*. You like *Krokodil*?"

"It is not as good as it was," I said.

We rumbled through Kharkov, dawdled into Rostov, crossed the Don, and chugged along the coast of the Black Sea, past beaches where workers on holiday lazed in the sun in woollen bathing-costumes, reading improving books or (so the guide told me) engaging in educational quizzes to keep their minds clear for their return to factory bench or workshop floor. At last we reached the Caucasus range, and as we climbed painfully through the rugged peaks, with Mount Ararat on our right and the rock where Prometheus came to grief somewhere over on the left, I was able to look down on timeless hamlets nestling in green folds of the hills, with Circassian dancers shooting out their legs in the vigorous *vprisyadku* dance on village greens in the cool of the evening, their wild cries echoing in the valleys like the shunting of distant goods wagons, the polished leather of their Russian boots glinting in the last rays of the sun. And so we came to Tiflis.

The Caucasus is like another world after the formal, glum Edwardian sophistication of Moscow. I felt quite out of place wearing a lounge suit in Tiflis. Here all was bustle and barbaric splendour, with sabres clashing, bells tinkling, and wild horses pounding about in all directions. The very songs

in the pubs were different. Whereas at closing-time in Gorky Street you might see some gloomy artisan come stumbling out of an ale-house singing:

Natasha the nut and bolt sorter with
dimples
Is loved by all on the night-shift;
All men on the afternoon-shift too
love Natasha;
How unfortunate then am I
Who love her best of all, hey ho,
For I am on the morning-shift
And can get neither a transfer to the
afternoon-shift
Nor a transfer to the night-shift, hey ho.

CHORUS

Still I do not complain to my foreman,
That good wise man.
For when productivity has risen
sufficiently
It is reasonable to suppose that
Natasha will accept me
If I ask her,

or some other Westernized popular song, here in the heart of the Caucasus, on the other hand, the songs are hearty, robust epics of a bygone age. Bands of richly adorned horsemen in Turkish trousers, brilliantly embroidered shirts and socks, fur hats and long tasselled gowns go clattering up and down the dusty alleys singing of kings who married nightingales. Uzbeki villagers in their little round berets throng the main streets of Tiflis, swigging *kumiss** from crude cups and obviously having about as much in common with Lenin *né* Ulyanov, Trotsky *né* Bronstein, Zinoviev *né* Apfelbaum or Kamenev *né* Rosenfeld as J. Stalin had with Henry VIII.

Here, I thought, was a great wonder indeed. Was it possible, I asked the members of my entourage, to believe that these fierce moustachioed tribesmen in their long *cherkeskas*†, cooking *shashlik* on their daggers over open fires, were fully paid-up members of the U.S.S.R.? And these flat-faced Buryat Mongols from the hills? Would blast-furnaces and hydro-electric plants and co-operative ball-point pen factories ever really rise among these sleepy villages, where a homeless peasant will dig a rectangular hole in the ground four feet deep, line it with logs, pull the roof on over his head, light his pipe, and not give a tinker's cuss?

"It is hard for you to understand," said the fashion editress of *Trud*, "but there is a Russian proverb which says



'It is surprising what a little encouragement will do, and failing that some other means must be devised.'

But I was not convinced. There are thousands of people in the Caucasus who cannot understand a word of Russian. There are even tribes descended from the Crusaders who go about their daily tasks in suits of armour, and nobody's going to teach *them* the finer points of dialectical materialism in a hurry, let alone how to take a motor-bike and sidecar to bits and put it back without spilling anything. I tell you plainly, the people I saw in Tiflis are no more like the people of Moscow or Leningrad than the people of Moscow or Leningrad are like the shoppers in Reading on a Saturday morning, ambling along Castle Street in their hunting pink and singing "Summer is i-cumen in" as they stack their week-end joints of venison into the backs of their station-wagons. Nobody was more surprised than Karl Marx when the Russians, of all people, decided to give a few of his notions a trial; and after my trip I felt bound to write an urgent note to the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, advising him to change his mind while there was still time. For some reason this note does not appear to have been delivered. But whatever happens in the future, no one can say I didn't warn them.

Next week:

The Past and the Present

* Fermented mare's milk
† Skirts, as far as I know

Danger! Unexploded Combs

By P. R. BOYLE

1. How far from your body are your underclothes:
 (a) Close?
 (b) Fairly close?
 (c) Remote?
2. Are they:
 (a) Completely covered?
 (b) Partly covered?
 (c) Fully exposed?

If these questions have not already come your way you would do well to ponder them, because if your underclothes are made of nylon and your answer to both questions is (c), you are a danger to yourself and your friends. They may explode, and if you have ever seen anyone whose underclothes have just exploded you will agree that that person looked remarkably silly.

Perhaps you disbelieve what I say. If so I don't blame you, and I admit that I have not fully investigated the matter myself: I am only quoting, and at second hand at that. But the authority that I quote is a sub-committee of the Ministry of Health, as reported in *The Times*. "The risk of explosion from wearing nylon underclothes," says this sub-committee, "is reduced to a harmless level when they are worn near to the body and are completely covered."

Even in these special circumstances the risk is not entirely eliminated, you notice; merely "reduced to a harmless

level." I confess that the idea of a harmless level of risk means almost nothing to me and therefore find the statement a little hard to interpret. Does it mean that the explosion would be just as violent as usual* but the risk of its occurring negligible, or that the explosion, should one occur, would be a harmless one, resulting merely in the blowing of a gusset?

From the point of view of the unlucky wearer this question is probably largely academic, for I imagine that even if his coat and trousers retained their faultless appearance the post-explosive smouldering of his shirt or vest would cause him some distress.

But perhaps masculine underwear is in some way immune from this alarming hazard. The sub-committee was concerned only with the design of nurses' uniforms (and a pretty odd job they seem to have made of it, in my opinion). I hope so, for the risk is apparently specially grave in operating theatres, where, I should have said, the underwear of a surgeon is more likely to be exposed than that of a nurse. In the theatre, I gather, these explosions are caused—how often? They don't say—"by static electricity among anæ-

thetics." It is news to me that static electricity is common among anæsthetics but if it is, and if it causes underclothes to explode, then I should like to know where else, outside the hospital, such surprises are to be feared.

How about thunderstorms, for example? When lightning is forecast should one change into the silk-and-wool lest one detonate spontaneously and blow one's mackintosh to ribbons? There is a big opening here for a free instructional handout from the Ministry.

The report suggests to me another question that, however intriguing it may be, I for one am content to leave in the realm of speculation. What do nurses wear under their underclothes? For even in the optimum conditions prescribed by the sub-committee actual contact with the wearer does not seem to be envisaged: "near to the body" is near enough.

I shall pursue this somewhat delicate line of inquiry no farther, but next time I am about to be trundled before the inquisition and am asked if I have any removable teeth, I shall come back sharply with some equally intimate questions of my own. I see no reason to expose my unconscious person to a risk of being blown to pieces just because my nurse prefers, though nylon-lined, to wear layers of wool next to the skin.

* "As usual." Note the sub-committee's use of the word "reduced", implying that these garments are normally worn visibly and at some distance from the body.



"The red-head!"

Toby Competitions

No. 74—Take Over

COMPANY A has made a take-over bid for Company B, whose trading activities are entirely different from its own. Give an extract of not more than 120 words from a speech by the Chairman of Company A, detailing the advantages that will accrue from the association of the two companies.

A prize consisting of a framed *Punch* original, to be selected from all available drawings, is offered for the best entry. Runners-up will receive a book token to the value of one guinea. Entries by first post on Friday, August 21, to TOBY COMPETITION No. 74, *Punch*, 10 Bouverie Street, London, E.C.4.

Report on Competition No. 71

(Gunville)

Competitors were asked to provide extracts from a local paper *Out West* covering such civic activities as the Ladies' Luncheon Club, Rotarian Annual Dinner, Anti-Liquor League meeting or the Town Publicity Committee. Apart from a few entries written almost entirely in shots and neighs, the level was fairly even. Many of the jokes were the same, which made judging a little like a prolonged attack of *déjà vu*. One competitor had apparently never seen or read a Western.

The winner is:

MISS GLORIA PRINCE
87 GREEN LANE
ADDLESTONE
SURREY

And then the schoolmarm she gits up on them purty feet of hers in reglar tantrum. You're the most inedicated posse of small-town scratchers that ever I chawed celery with, she sez, and it's a crying shame a woman o' my callipers should have to dissociate with you. Ain't none of you ever *been* to France? she demands, beans and catsup and cornpone seem to be all you know. The Spelling Bee was a failure because you can't read, she sez, there ain't four Brains in the whole Club for a Trust, and when your menfolk come all they do is swill liquor like pigs and play pistol Dotto. Aintcha got *no* yuman pride? she hollers.

Runners-up were:

Extract from *Gunville Clarion and Battle Cry of Freedom*:

... At Rotary Club Dinner, Billy Carpenter, local mortician, put forward a much-needed civic improvement, the enlargement of Boot Hill Cemetery. "It jest ain't big enough," Billy explained. "Besides, the name's undignified. It oughta be changed to 'Heavenly Rest' Cemetery. More poetic, like."

... At this point the Dinner was interrupted by a fusillade of shots from the street. "It's the Dalton Gang!" someone sang out. Marshal Wyatt Earp hurriedly left the meeting. After another fusillade of shots he returned. "Reckon you'll have to enlarge the cemetery now," he announced. "I just shot six Daltons." The motion was passed unanimously. A strawberry social was planned for next month. Twenty members were present.—*Kenneth King*, "The Studio," Great Woodcote Park, Purley, Surrey

The monthly meeting of the Gunville Ladies' Luncheon Club took place in Mrs. M. Dillon's parlour yesterday, the Rev. Halliday presiding.

Mrs. H. Cassidy, the popular Hon. Secretary, wearing her green gingham with matching holster and pearl-handled colt, opened the meeting.

Mrs. Cassidy declared it a pity that the Annual Outing was postponed, but they all knew what sort of a lady the Hon. Treasurer was.

Mrs. J. James, the Hon. Treasurer, then shot her.

The Rev. Halliday criticized Mrs. James's destructive attitude.

The monthly competition—"Knit your own saddle-blanket"—was won by Mrs. W. B. Hickock. Mrs. Dillon provided the excellent refreshments.

Monthly wreath donations amounted to \$1.50—a new "high."—*H. Langton*, 19a Bartholomew Road, Kentish Town, London, N.W.5

TOWN PUBLICITY COMMITTEE ADOPTS NEW MOTTER

At the recent meeting of Gunville's Publicity Committee the question of a new motter for stimulating interest in the town was debated. It was felt that the old one, Stay and Die in Sunny

Gunville, left a good deal to be desired in view of the frequent shootings-up, the everlasting drought and recurrent dust-storms. Among suggestions put forward were: Gunville Is Funville; Watch Out, Stranger, We've Got You Covered; There's Gold In Gunville Gulch; We're No Big City, but We're Proud; and Sooner or Later Gunville Gets You. Finally, though not without dissension, the Committee adopted: Gay Gunville, the Puncher's Paradise, as being less ambiguous than the rest.—*R. A. McKenzie*, 28 Harold Road, Beulah Spa, London, S.E.19

Regret at the ever-increasing demands made on ratepayers by the expenses of the Sheriff's department were expressed by Rotarian Jake Ives during his Presidential address at the Annual Dinner of Gunville Rotary Club.

Rotarian Ives maintained that the town's spirit of private enterprise was being stifled by those, probably recently arrived from the softer Eastern States (*laughter*) of their great country, who lacked the rugged initiative of the pioneers (*Hear, hear.*)

At this point Rotarian Ives was kidnapped by masked intruders, and later found dead, minus his wallet and Presidential orb.

President-elect Rotarian Hank Burle is a well-known local businessman who has shared in the prosperity of our growing town. A mortician, he . . . —*S. L. Short*, 49 Alva Way, Carpenters Park, Watford Herts.

Guinea Book-tokens to the above, and to:

Mrs. M. H. Hughes, 23 Cherry Garden Lane, Folkestone, Kent;
Mrs. N. G. Beeny, 28 Streatham Common North, London, S.W.16

Bentley's Gallery



Sir Kenneth Clark

Sir Kenneth Clark
Made the obvious remark
In describing Salvador Dali
As "a proper Charley."



"I said you hadn't ordered enough; we've run right out."

No Pencil is Safe

By DAVID STONE

ONE of the questions in a self-analysis quiz I did the other day proved I was a thief.

Well, I'm not a thief. Nor you. But, asked the quiz's author ("Psychiatrist"), have you ever used the company's stamps, affiliated (his word) a pencil for your own use?

Pencil—I stirred guiltily at the word, and that evening, as soon as telly had shut down, I went through the pens and pencils which I keep in a Bernard Leach pot on my desk.

There were twenty-two writing instruments in the pot—seventeen pencils and five ball-point pens. Not one had been bought by me, or even—I had to admit reluctantly to myself—given to me.

Colours and makes revealed some of their sources immediately. There were the orange Rowney Victoria pencils favoured by the *Daily Express*, and presumably appropriated by me on a visit to their offices. There was a cherry-red Eagle Cardinal thoughtfully provided by the B.B.C. A green Venus 3810 had The Amalgamated Press Ltd. boldly stamped on it in gold.

By the standards of the quiz I was not just a casual thief, I was a hardened operator. And this was only a beginning. Where did this ball-point with LITTLEWOODS HOME SHOPPING SERVICE on it come from? Or the bright-yellow pencil which told me A DOUBLE DIAMOND WORKS WONDERS?

I recognized a much-bitten black

chinagraph pencil. I had seen it drawing bold lines on a market research director's talc. Did he miss it, I wondered? Was he even now, over a treble pink gin ("Plymouth, dear, please") in The Guinea, giving an inquirer a short run-down on my character, beginning with "I never realized what sort of a chap he was until one day in my office..."

Social workers know all about people who blot from their minds what they don't want to recall. This Cumberland Derwent No. 19-20, for example, a lovely wine-dark coloured lead which I remember admiring in the hand of a business friend.

He used it to mark manila folders. It had a lovely visual effect. I suppose I *must* have taken it. But how? Did I wait until he had gone out of the room, or slip it furtively under my *Evening Standard* while he was on the telephone? Or, most unlikely, could he have given it to me?

One yellow Eagle Mirado has H. J. Ryman Ltd., stamped on it. This seems a real coup, having a pencil belonging to a stationer's.

The strangest, though, is a short stub of yellow pencil with a rubber at one end. On one side are the words RD FABER U.S.A. MONGOL 482, and on the other UNITED STATES SENATE. How it came into my possession I have no idea.

Well, the quiz showed me as a thief all right, but it didn't tell me what to do about it. I suppose I could return all my swag in person, casually entering, say, the Double Diamond works and dropping a pencil on the floor. But even with the economy fares, £174 4s. seems a lot to get a pencil back to the Senate.

Perhaps letters are the answer.

Dear President Eisenhower,—You don't know me, but...

The only snag about this method is signing the letters. I *could* use the Post Office pen. But suppose my garnering isn't just an amusing foible—suppose I really do need help? In this case, it would be unwise to go into a post office.

At Bow Street to-day, accused of stealing a wooden pen-holder and relief nib, the property of the Postmaster-General, was...

I ought to be grateful it's pencils, anyway, and not typewriters.



criticism



BOOKING OFFICE

Vive l'Amour!

Love and the French. Nina Epton. Cassell, 25/-.

FRENCH women have an aggravating custom of calling their lovers and husbands by the names of animals, cream cakes and vegetables. The custom irritated Maupassant; and it might well vex us, too, to be addressed, in moments of emotion, as a rabbit or a cabbage. And yet we have much to learn about *l'amour* from our neighbours across the Channel. For love, to the French, is cricket. Love ranks with literature, music and *haute cuisine*. With their traditional genius for classification the French have set *l'amour* among the arts. This does not mean that it is an intellectual pastime: it means that love

is an ideal, and a pleasure to be cultivated, a pleasure capable of a thousand refinements. Balzac considered woman as a musical instrument: it depended (so he said) on husband or lover whether she was a mere violin or a Stradivarius, whether she was discordant or divinely harmonious. Balzac may have been a celibate for the greater part of his life, but he understood.

Love and the French was conceived, aptly enough, at a champagne lunch, when Miss Epton sat next to a stimulating newspaper editor. The champagne and the editor went their respective ways, but the idea remained, and now she has worked it into a delectable book. She ranges from the troubadours and the recalcitrant lovers of the Middle Ages, through the voluptuous love of the Renaissance, the heroic love of the Classical Age, the sophisticated and tender love of the eighteenth century, the romantic, material love of the nineteenth century, to the fast-driving Sagan heroines of to-day.

Alas! despite the photograph of the Café de Flore, there is small romance about whisky-drinking and jeans in the Left Bank bistros; and for all the pleasures scattered through the early pages the chapter I most enjoyed in this book was the chapter on the nineteenth century. What glamour, what dash, what passion! As Monsieur Henri d'Almérés observed, the First Empire "was a very amorous period, because there were so many uniforms." Every nice girl loved a soldier, and every girl made extravagant demands. What a delicious age, when a *petite maîtresse* demanded six hundred dresses a year and three hundred and sixty-five pairs of shoes, and one of her beds (how many did she need?) cost £20,000! What an enchanting, amorous, Récamier world! The *merveilleuses* and the *nymphes*, audaciously draped in gauze, were "reading novels, dancing and doing nothing," the *incroyables*, and the *petits maitres*, with their jargon and lorgnettes, were strutting about like so many

dancing masters. And since the Second Empire, too, was ablaze with epaulettes, the century continued to be amorous, and it was amorous on the grand material scale. In those pre-Messina days, in the days before Wolfenden, la Paiva, the courtesan of courtesans, could afford to build a palace with onyx stairs; and, according to Viel-Castel, Lord Hertford paid a million for a single night with la Castiglione. As for Cora Pearl, her admirers sent her boxes of *marrons glacés*, each *marron* wrapped in a note for fifty thousand francs.

Such are the marginalia of love; and Miss Epton's book is full of attractive marginalia, curious facts and celebrated figures. It is a delightful bedside book, it is also a gay social study. It does not, perhaps, make enough excursions into French literature. What of Gérard de Nerval, with his nebulous divinities? What of Baudelaire, with his *Vénus blanche* and his *Vénus noire*? What of Colette, with her Léah and Chéri: Colette, who explored love with magistral delicacy?

But it would be merely carping to suggest omissions in Miss Epton's book. *Vive l'amour!* Or, as the député said, when someone shrewdly observed that the sexes differed: "*Vive la différence!*" I look forward eagerly to *Love and the English*.

— JOANNA RICHARDSON

POETS' CORNER



16. ROBERT GRAVES

NEW FICTION

A Guest and His Going. P. H. Newby. Cape, 15/-

The Men from the Bush. Ronald Hardy. Muller, 15/-

Italian Short Stories. Edited by John Lehmann. Faber, 16/-

Amongst Those Missing. Paul Capon. Heinemann, 16/-

Though this new novel may be enjoyed quite independent of *The Picnic at Sakkara* or *Revolution and Roses*, it reintroduces Professor Perry (become increasingly peppery in middle-age), and his wife; Captain and Mrs. Tehia; and above all Muawiya Khaslat (journalist), invited to London as a guest of the British Council at the time of the Suez crisis and inspired with a plan to import

first action is to borrow an ancient Morris belonging to the eccentric Napier Hillingdon (Perry's landlord, who is subsidizing the professor's Helvetia School for Foreigners) and earn the newspaper soubriquet of "Egyptian terror-driver" by wrecking it at Marble Arch; subsequently he finances and attends a champagne-and-smoked-salmon party in Perry's flat while still a fugitive from the law; and, having finally driven Hillingdon over the edge of insanity by fervent protestations of friendship which he mistakes for satanic temptation, is shot by the landlord with a curare-tipped dart through a three-foot blowpipe—happily without serious consequences. Mr. Newby, whose mastery of the comedy of errors seemed slightly to slacken in the second volume of this trilogy, is now firmly back on form: Hillingdon is an unmitigated delight (which goes without saying for Muawiya also); metropolitan descriptions are fresh and vivid; the personalities of both Mary Perry and Elaine Tehia emerge much more clearly than before; and the three books taken together provide valuable illustrations of the reasons why Europeans and Orientals often fail to achieve an understanding.

Ronald Hardy is a talented writer whose main defect lies in his unreserved adoption of the Graham Greene mythology and attitude to life; his first novel had a priest as protagonist and an Indonesian setting: *The Men from the Bush* is set in an eroded British protectorate in Africa: the main character an unhappy adolescent, wearing a surgical boot and referred to throughout as "the boy"; the raffia Devil from *Journey without Maps* makes an appearance, and the Catholic missionary is actually called Father Greene. That the style and point of view should be so derivative is all the more regrettable since many of the scenes and the actual chain of events are evidently conceived and executed by an imagination powerful enough to dispense with an influence which lends a superficially secondhand quality to the work.

John Lehmann has long proved him-

self to be the best editor of his generation in England; and his selection of *Italian Short Stories*, prefaced by a most interesting and informative introduction outlining the difficulties of authorship in Italy, displays his customary acumen and flair. It includes not only established modern classics such as Silone's "The Fox" and Moravia's "Poor Fish," but tales less familiar to the English reader: Tommaso Landolfi's hilariously macabre "Gogol's Wife" (a rubber dummy provided with "every smallest attribute of her sex," and eventually inflated by the Russian author until "she" burst), for instance: while the newer school is brilliantly represented by Alberto Arbasino's extraordinarily graphic account of a homosexual seduction, "Giorgio versus Luciano," whose cumulative progress is told by hunter and quarry in turn.

Paul Capon's versatility in the popular forms of literature is astonishing: equally at home with science-fiction, detective stories and novels of suspense, he can also be relied upon for dialogue and characterization above the average in these respective media. Here the assorted survivors from a smashed passenger plane in the jungle of Guiana include an excellent RAF fish impostor and a creditable stab at a heroine of mixed ancestry: though why the secret of the hero's identity should be divulged by an indiscreet passage in the blurb remains a mystery greater than any surrounding the characters.

— J. MACLAREN-ROSS

America in Doubt. Alexander Werth. Robert Hale, 21/-

These notes on conversations during three months as a visiting professor at Columbus, Ohio, during the summer of 1957, together with a short selection of letters received after Mr. Werth had returned home, are good reporting, important historical material about opinion among the intelligent young, and great fun. They are also terrifying; but then other people's opinions generally are. The full implications of almost any point of view stretch to war and disaster.

These college boys were worried by the way Russia refused to live up to its image; it was the time of the first sputnik and the final letter describes the Mikoyan visit. They were worried about Little Rock, particularly from the point of view of the Federal invasion of State rights. They were worried about trying to buy popularity with starving populations by giving Cadillacs to their rulers. But as well as the doubts the vitality and attractiveness come through, and there are plenty of incidental observations on all aspects of American life. Skilfully chosen newspaper extracts set the particular conversation against a background of national opinion.

— R. G. G. P.

AT THE PLAY

In Retrospect

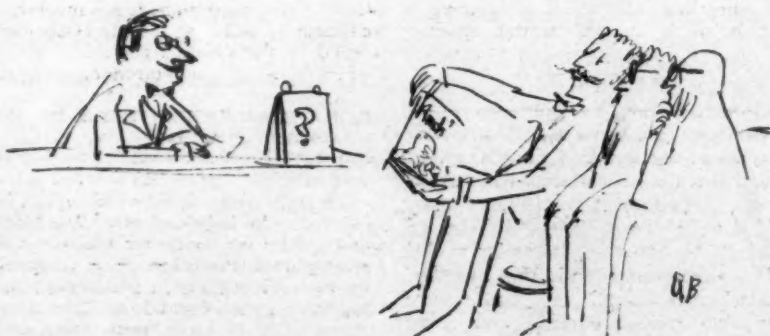
a raisin in the sun—(ADELPHI)

DURING the Gap new productions have fortunately been few. The one that stands out in memory is the Stratford *Coriolanus*, with Laurence Olivier amplifying in maturity the part he made so interesting at the Old Vic just before the war. By any standards this is surely great acting; in its range it makes us conscious of all kinds of contemporary relevance in the play. As that tremendous old war-horse, Volumnia, Edith Evans is in fine voice, and Peter Hall's production is mercifully free from tricks.

On consecutive nights in a notable double this was followed by John Gielgud's solo recital of Shakespeare, which we saw at Edinburgh two years ago. The programme was again divided into Youth, Manhood and Old Age. Many of the big speeches were from parts in which he has given memorable stage performances. It would be hard to imagine them spoken more beautifully, or with better understanding.

Enjoying a high barometer in its twenty-fifth season, the Open Air Theatre has its best company for some time. So far Robert Atkins has put on a sparkling *Twelfth Night* and a sound *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Anthony Sharp, a recruit of distinction, was a well-considered Malvolio and a deliciously silly Quince. Mr. Atkins has enjoyed himself infectiously as Sir Toby and Bottom, and Dudley Jones was a nimble and true-voiced Feste.

Noël Coward has succeeded better than most in the nearly impossible task of adapting a French farce. *Occupe-toi d'Amélie*, the Feydeau play in which the Barraults dazzled us three years ago, has a series of sure-fire situations; in spite of some terribly embarrassing jokes in the first act Mr. Coward has clothed them in acceptable dialogue, and Tony Richardson exacts a hot pace from a willing cast. Vivien Leigh is wonderfully funny as Lulu, the fashionable tart—a performance of masterly control—and



"Vegetable with mineral attachments. Come, now; you must remember."

Anthony Quayle, Max Adrian and George Devine all shine.

The Ring of Truth is the lightest play Wynyard Browne has yet given us; at the same time it is a sobering reminder of how near we all are, always, to catastrophe. A lost engagement ring, and his happily married couple begins plausibly to slide apart, in an atmosphere increasingly explosive and beyond their power to check. The marriage rocks. The end is anti-climax, but as neatly wrought as the rest of the piece, and the couple is taken amusingly by Margaret Johnston and David Tomlinson, with some good comedians in support.

Plays which set out to show a way of life as boring are not often entertaining, but Arnold Wesker's *Roots* is that, and touching into the bargain. It is a courageous play, for it dares to strip the glamour from the remote peasant and show that a cottage daughter can be justified in cutting adrift. It is all very quietly and, except for a mixed bag of dialects, accurately observed, and the part of the troubled girl might have been written for Joan Plowright, so well she plays it.

One to Another, a highbrow revue by a large posse of authors, including N. F. Simpson, John Mortimer, Robert Benchley and John Cranko, is unparochial and less concerned with satire than a gentle lunacy. When its surrealism comes off, it is rather successful; when I saw it there were too many misfires, but no doubt it has been tightened up. Beryl Reid, Patrick Wymark and Joe Melia are good, although the team seems underweight in the acid department.

Once More, With Feeling is a thin little comedy which hasn't translated from the American. John Neville is miscast and Dorothy Tutin has a thankless part. Only Martin Miller is funny.

So much for the deep past. This last week the excitement has been a *raisin in the sun* (sic), the first play by a negress to reach Broadway; it did more than merely do that, for it scooped the New York Critics' Circle award as the play of the year. A little surprisingly, I think. It is a neurotic melodrama about a negro family living in a Chicago tenement under the thumb of a benevolent matriarch. All their frustrations are triggered off by the arrival of a ten-thousand-dollar cheque, insurance on the life of the late patriarch; in particular those of her son, Walter, a crazy mixed-up kid on such an outsize Tennessee Williams scale that we never discover what it is he really wants. "Momma, you just don't understand" is the theme-phrase. Momma runs into racial trouble by going off and buying a house in an all-white area of the city, which seemed to me the last thing such a modest and sensible old lady would have done; she gives Walter the bulk of the money so that he can stop being a sulky chauffeur,

and he tries to start a liquor store and loses the lot. Lorraine Hansberry's suggestion at the end is that, temporarily purged of passion, the family will be happy in its new house, but everything we have been told about the uncompromising attitude of their white neighbours questions this.

My feeling is that a *raisin in the sun* is a skilfully arranged set piece of emotional fireworks. It is, of course, a very sentimental play, but I think its real weakness is its very low flashpoint. We should be moved by Walter's downfall, but by then we have seen him storming and weeping so often that we are more than a little punch-drunk. The writing varies a good deal. It can be extremely sensitive, as in the delightful scenes between Walter's sister, astonishingly called Beneatha, and her Nigerian boy-friend; it can also be repetitive and wordy—faults which show up in Lloyd Richards' very slow production. But if the play is not so good as we were led to believe, at least there is no doubt about the quality of its actors, even though they are a little over-driven. There is an electrifying performance from Olga James as Beneatha (to me much the most interesting character), the brains of the family, who seemed all fire and spirit. Momma's personality is beautifully filled out by Juanita Moore, and Earle Hyman tears himself amazingly to shreds as poor old Walter. And this is not to miss the quieter pleasures of Kim Hamilton's Ruth, Walter's long-suffering wife, and Bari Johnson's charming young patriot from Nigeria.

—ERIC KEOWN

AT THE PICTURES

Round-up

IN the special circumstances I have to go against all my principles, and try to give a very brief opinion about no fewer than nine of the twenty-eight films I have seen since my last published review. It might be worse, I might feel that all twenty-eight demanded mention, but nine is bad enough. I feel strongly that more than two, or at most three, can't be fairly treated in this space. Even so, I'm leaving out some no longer showing in London, in the hope of going into a bit of detail when they are released.

First the Polish *Ashes and Diamonds* (Director: Andrzej Wajda). The title suggests the very texture of the film. It is about political assassination in Poland just after the war, and—in spite of the fondness for coincidences that seems to be characteristic of stories from that part of the world—is most impressive, moving and memorable. Some people have concentrated on its political aspect; what I found most striking was the humanity, the character.

Next—I'm not attempting any order of merit—Jacques Tati's *Mon Oncle*. I

SINCE

'A Hole in the Head,



FRANK SINATRA SUSAN HAYWARD
AUDREY HEPBURN JACQUES TATI

found this extremely enjoyable and I don't at all agree with the people who compare it unfavourably with the earlier Tati films. The whole point of these things is comic observation, and the absolutely perfect timing that springs a laugh by the juxtaposition of shots that may be of quite ordinary things or actions. To criticize the "plot," or object to a lack of comic personality in Tati himself—or for that matter to praise him, as many do, as if he were just a funny man—seems to me quite wrong. I laughed most of the time; that's what counts.

The controversial and indeed sensational *I Want to Live* (Director: Robert Wise) I found absorbing: it is pungently well-made as a film, and Susan Hayward is good as the doomed good-time girl. I think most of the objections to the theme boil down to the fact that supporters of capital punishment are upset by suddenly having to face the thought of what it involves.

The Mouse that Roared (Director: Jack Arnold) is already released. We saw it in the same week as *Left, Right and Centre* (Director: Sidney Gilliat), and I'm one of those who found it more interesting. It is a bit of a scrap-heap like many British comedies, but it is inventive with nonsense and has a fresh comic idea (as well as Peter Sellers); whereas *L. R. & C.*, though on the face of it a worked-out satire on our political scene, with undeniably good moments, is

essentially a rearrangement of the familiar ingredients that everyone knows it's correct to laugh at.

Then *The Nun's Story* (Director: Fred Zinnemann)—which is the sort of thing I have a blind spot for. It has a high gloss and is very well and conscientiously done; but the only bits of it I took any real pleasure in were those scenes where, I would say, it wakes up—by giving us change of scene, fresh characters, in short a *rest* from the long, concentrated, careful examination of every detail of the monastic discipline to which a young and beautiful girl submits herself. A great amount of this picture consists of a study of the exact process by which a sensitive individual is forced into a harshly unnatural mould, and though Audrey Hepburn perfectly represents the individual she is wasted.

There are good moments in *The Boy and the Bridge* (Director: Kevin McClory), but as a whole it exasperated me. It has some pleasing photography, but also much that is self-consciously "arty" in the style of twenty years ago, and the fable is full of loose ends and unexplained or impossible things. (I put down a list of ten at once.) A quite typical example of the British habit of stringing effects together for the momentary laugh or surprise in the confidence that the audience won't "connect," it has naturally been chosen to represent Britain at Venice.

A Hole in the Head (Director: Frank Capra) has an easy contrived sentimental ending and other over-sentimental moments characteristic of Capra, but also a great deal of brilliant comedy; much of it I thoroughly enjoyed. Frank Sinatra is his usual relaxed self, but most memorable is Edward G. Robinson in a comedy part, splendidly funny.

Finally Disney's *Sleeping Beauty*, which amounts to a much-magnified, highly-polished, brightly-coloured version of *Snow White* with all modern (technical) improvements. Presumably most people like watching the elaborately ingenious imitation of reality in a simplified strong-outline convention with bright simple colours. Here I'm in a minority again.

Worth-while releases over these seven weeks (*Punch* review dates in brackets) include: *Middle of the Night* (17/6/59), excellent; *The Young and the Guilty* (19/3/58), at last given a release as a second feature and much better than the top half of the programme; and *Some Like it Hot* (27/5/59), raucous but very funny.

— RICHARD MALLETT

ON THE AIR

Mutter of Taste

THE young people are home for the holidays and anxious to catch up on their TV. Very well—let's try Channel One. No? You want a go at the commercial? All right then, but I warn you it'll probably be pretty futile. What I mean, I think, is that it'll probably be pretty embarrassing. In recent weeks I have shared a number of programmes with the young people and experienced acute discomfort. And if you accuse me straightway of being an old fuddy-duddy I can only say in defence that my experience seems to be common to very many parents: at least ninety per cent of those questioned agreed with the statement that independent television is getting away with murder, blue comedy, salacious situation drama and bad taste.

I sit there in my armchair... and wait. Television Playhouse is presenting a piece by Peter Draper called "The Cymbals at Your Door," and the only guide I have to the play's suitability as family entertainment is a footnote in *TV Times* reading "The play concerns the difficulty of the generations to communicate with one another and the greater difficulty of a person who was young in the pre-war generation to

understand the people who are young in the present world." There is no "U" or "A" or "X" or "H" to help me. Soon, though, I am aware that I have backed a loser. It is obvious from the quality of the smooching and the nature of the innuendo that sex is rearing its head in an unmistakably non-"U" manner. What am I to do? Switch off? Switch over? Hardly possible with these young democrats. Excuse myself and nip round to the local? Cowardly.

As it happens the course I adopt is no more praiseworthy. I become facetious, poke verbal fun at the play as it unfolds, and try to bring down the unhealthy temperature. And my interruptions are not welcome.

I shall be told, of course, that sensible well-adjusted parents can take such matters in their stride. Afterwards we ought to form up into a discussion group and thrash the whole thing out, and a few wise and well-chosen words from me will put the play in perspective. But I don't want to start the holidays with a pulpit address on moral virtues. Or I shall be told that young people to-day remain unaffected by fiction of this type, and that I am a square to bother my head for a moment with their reactions. To which I shall reply that I intend to remain a veritable square on the hypotenuse.

Television, I insist, is either family entertainment and unquestionably so or it must submit to the same kind of censorship as the cinema. I sign myself "Angry Father."

One of the best laughs on the air at the moment is "Holiday Town Parade," ABC Television's glittering parade of fashion, curves and muscle compered by McDonald Hobley. Each week six fantastically overdeveloped males compete in an Adonis competition, and it is a fair treat to see them flexing and unflexing, locking their greased torsos into photographic poses and (later) shambling through the finale with the beauty queens, fashion models and chorus girls. On the other hand you might find this embarrassing. I can take it.

The BBC series "The Silent Sky," a three-part programme on learning to glide introduced by Peter Scott, made first-class TV—instructive, relaxing and memorably beautiful. The camera work of the West Region Film Unit gave us superb sequences of gliders in action and of the magic carpet of the English countryside seen from 3000 feet. An "A" (and a "U") to Peter Scott and Nicholas Crocker.

— BERNARD HOLLOWOOD



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